

INTIMATIONS  
AND  
EVIDENCES  
OF A  
FUTURE STATE.

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By the Rev. T. WATSON.

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INTRODUCTION

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# ERRATA.

Page. Line.

- 9. 2. *for immovably read immoveably.*
- 45. 13. *for hopes are r. hopes were.*
- 48. 2. *from the bottom, for it is very common to find r. it is very commonly with a view to find.*
- 63. 4. *from the bottom, for in whom r. on whom.*
- 70. 3. *from the bottom, for baser r. base.*
- 71. 4. *for affectoins r. affections.*
- 78. 6. *for creatures r. creation.*
- 94. 5. *for clear interest r. dear interest.*
- 113. 1. *for to tell r. tell.*
- 127. 4. *from the bottom, for servents r. servants.*
- 190. 4. *dele is.*
- 217. 12. *for statesman r. statesmen.*

INTRO.

## INTRODUCTION.

**I**N collecting the evidences of a future state, I have made no scruple in calling to my assistance several intimations from reason and natural religion; and to gather from different parts of God's works such things as speak immortality to man. I cannot see upon what good grounds we ought to reject such useful auxiliaries, and to build all our hopes on revelation alone. Christianity came not to extinguish other lights, but to give a perfection to what we already knew, and to supply what was deficient. A future state has been the doctrine of all ages; we cannot trace it back to its origin; it is coeval with religion. Life and immortality were not *brought to light*, but *enlightened*, by the gospel (for so it should be translated). Besides, in treating of the evidences of revelation, we are obliged

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to

to employ reason and natural religion to support and strengthen this cause. Reason and revelation never can be enemies, but friends, that will always mutually assist and defend one another. Whenever they stand on opposite sides, there is good reason to suppose, that either the one or the other has been unfairly dealt with. In contending with unbelievers, we must combat them on principles which they themselves allow. You must convince them, by reason, of the necessity and superior advantages of revelation.

It may be proper also to observe, that in the following treatise, the reader must not expect to meet with any deep researches, or any metaphysical subtleties. Such things may silence or stupify, but do seldom convince. I wish to say only plain things, and such as may be generally understood.

Some part of the following arguments, I am afraid, will not be admitted by those, who are disposed to favour the doctrine of materialism. But, where there is a choice,  
and



and some variety in the evidences, I trust such readers will not peevishly or indignantly reject the whole entertainment, because one or two dishes may not be exactly to their taste. We are formed with tastes as different in literature as in food; and things, which may be much disliked by one, may afford pleasure and nourishment to another. Materialism is a difficult, and not a cheerful system. It is difficult, because it obliges us to prove a negative; and it is not cheerful, because it weakens some of our best hopes, and must create some apprehension, that the lamp, when once extinguished, may be never again revived.

I have omitted saying any thing about the immateriality of the soul, because the discussion involves in it a thousand niceties concerning essences, and substances, and matter, and spirit. Such discussions are always dark and obscure; we wade far out of our depths; we lose ourselves in a mist of words, and doubtful and ambiguous terms. We cannot easily discriminate between material and immaterial substances. Besides,

the main question is no ways concerned in the solution; for to say that God cannot confer immortality on matter, affects one of the leading doctrines of the gospel, the resurrection of the dead. All that believe in the resurrection of the body, must admit that the resurrection body will be formed for immortality.

## PART I.

### Evidences from REASON and NATURAL RELIGION.

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#### CHAP. I.

*The Nature and Degree of Evidence to be expected for a Future State.*

**P**REVIOUS to our entrance on the main question, it may be proper to consider what degree of evidence we have reason to expect for a future state. Some, perhaps, may startle at such a consideration, imagining that it must be very idle and unnecessary; but a little reflection will convince us of its propriety; for the question is not, what God can give, but what may be proper for creatures in our present situation. In furnishing this evidence, there



seem to be two things that infinite wisdom has regarded ; first, that the evidence for a future state should not be so strong as to mar our usefulness, or to interfere with our duties in the present world ; and second, that it should be of that nature, as not to destroy the freedom of choice, or the essence of virtue.

The *first* character is, that it should not be so strong as to mar our usefulness, or to interfere with our duties in the present world. It will readily be allowed, that the impression of a future state might be made so powerful upon the mind, as to render man not only indifferent about the things of this life, but disgusted and totally dissatisfied with his situation, wishing and eagerly craving to be dismissed from this clog of mortality, from this prison, and to be put in possession of eternal happiness. Such a state of mind would be absolutely inconsistent with our situation and usefulness, and would lead us to neglect our families, our friends, and our necessary duties. Enthusiasts may possibly say, that this is the  
very

very state we should all aspire to; and that to be thus dead to the world is the summit of christian perfection. With such I would not pretend to reason. Wrapt up in their own feelings, they pay no respect to the most cogent arguments. Happy is it for us, that our foolish wishes are not always granted; that we are not under the government of vain man, but under the direction of infinite wisdom! The present world makes a part of the grand system, as well as the future; and the one must be preserved as a comfortable and commodious abode for its short lived inhabitants, as well as the other eternally secured for its immortal possessors. These two worlds are very closely connected, and their real interests are no ways inconsistent. A man may be an useful and a happy member of this society on earth, and yet, by this, be no ways disqualified for making a fit and welcome guest in the regions of everlasting bliss.

But were the evidence for a future state so powerful and strong, as to strike all mankind with irresistible force, who then would

care and labour for the present world? even every duty here would prove irksome to the good man: with his wishes constantly fixed on heaven, he would be perpetually longing for his dissolution; and the more prepared that a man was for his removal, his uneasiness and dissatisfaction would proportionally increase. And if the torments of hell were constantly playing before the wicked, what a scene of horror and distraction would this world be! In things of much less importance, we may often have opportunities of seeing the stupefaction and other strange effects brought on by ardent desire. A pleasing and ingenious French writer, in whose works we meet with the most beautiful prospects of providence, and whose labours seem directed to serve the cause of virtue, and the best interests of men, speaking on this very subject, gives a lively picture of the effects produced by objects highly desirable taking possession of the mind. "When I arrived in France," says he, "in a vessel from India, as soon as the sailors could perfectly distinguish their native land;



“ they became for the most part incapable  
“ of any work. Some fixed their eyes im-  
“ movably on the shore, without ever turn-  
“ ing them aside to any other object; others  
“ put on their best clothes, as if they were  
“ that moment to land; some talked to  
“ themselves, and others wept. In pro-  
“ portion as we advanced, the disorder of  
“ their different passions increased. As  
“ they had been absent several years, they  
“ could not cease admiring the verdure of  
“ the hills, the foliage of the trees, and even  
“ the rocks covered with moss and weeds,  
“ as if all these had been objects quite  
“ new. The steeples of the different villa-  
“ ges, in which they had been born, and  
“ which they knew at a great distance, and  
“ named one after another, filled them with  
“ gladness; but as soon as the vessel en-  
“ tered the port, and they saw upon the  
“ quay their friends, their fathers and their  
“ mothers, their wives and their children  
“ stretching out their arms, rejoicing and  
“ weeping and calling them by their names,  
“ it was impossible to keep a single person  
“ on

“ on board ; they all leapt ashore, and there  
“ was a necessity of sending other sailors to  
“ manage the vessel.” Judge then from  
this what would be the effect, if there were  
presented to us strong and lively proofs of  
the eternal world, of that heavenly country  
which is inhabited by all that is great and  
good. All the labours and occupations of  
this vain world would instantly cease ; the  
certain prospect of immortal happiness would  
throw the soul into that divine rapture,  
which would fill and engross all its powers.  
Let us adore then that wisdom, that has so  
measured out to us the evidences for the  
future world, as to unfit us for no one duty,  
and to deprive us of no one virtuous en-  
joyment ; but at the same time has given to  
us sufficient to produce the conviction and  
lively hope of another world in all those who,  
by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek  
for glory, honour, and immortality !

Were the passage from the present to the  
future world clear and easy, few would sus-  
tain long the burthens of the present life :  
but Providence has wisely covered these  
eternal

eternal mansions with obscurity, and placed doubt and fear as guards on the passage.

But the *second* character of the evidence of a future state was, that it should be of that nature, as not to destroy the freedom of choice, and the essence of virtue. The degree of evidence should be such, as not to compel, but to leave room for the exercise of the will. Could we bring this evidence to a mathematical demonstration, or arrive at a moral certainty, then there would be no merit in a virtuous life, and nothing but insanity could act otherwise. Men would be little better than mere machines, constantly acting under a controuling influence. This would destroy the very essence of virtue, and men would be religious by compulsion. But the present darkness and uncertainty, which hang over some of the most important truths of religion, give a free exercise to the industry, to the vigilance and resolution of man. It is this that constitutes the merit of virtue, and determines this world to be a state of moral discipline. The degree of evidence

is



is of such a nature, as to determine the honest and diligent in the government of their lives; but not of that strength as to command and overpower the giddy, the dissipated and unattentive: it is of such a nature as should make us in all our actions regard futurity; but not of that force as to render us totally indifferent and negligent of the things of this life: it is, in short, so balanced as to enable us to act our part with propriety in this world, whilst at the same time it maintains a superior regard to eternity. And the fact is, that to determine man to embrace the cause of virtue, it is not absolutely necessary that the proofs of futurity should be exceedingly strong, because virtue has so many other advantages to recommend its cause. The morals that the gospel recommend are the very best prescription for health, and every kind of pure enjoyment. They procure peace of mind, reputation, true honour; and they open our prospects to everlasting enjoyment.

The result then of this inquiry into the degree of evidence necessary for establishing  
our

our belief in futurity furnishes us with some useful instructions applicable to two different classes of men: First, to the believer in the eternal world, by moderating his expectations, and preventing that uneasiness, which must ever follow disappointment, and particularly a disappointment in such a material article. It reconciles him also to the darkness and uncertainty of this world, by convincing him that it cannot be otherwise without a total alteration in our present state. We are here in a state of trial and probation, in a state preparatory to a more perfect existence, and darkness then must be our condition.

To the infidel, such an enquiry should afford instruction, by convincing him that his demands for more and stronger evidence must be unreasonable; that this evidence must be governed by propriety, and a due regard to our situation and appointment here; that we have as much, and every evidence, that we can possibly expect. The more closely that we enquire into the appointments of providence, the more reason will

will we find for adoring infinite love, and for acknowledging, that all is wise and well.

Such remarks as these may be very proper to prepare us for estimating the evidences for a future existence. We are not to expect any thing like a mathematical demonstration, nor yet such as will amount to a moral certainty. We are not to expect that any one evidence, taken singly, will produce a full and perfect conviction; but that the whole, taken collectively, may be of that strength as to regulate all our actions, and determine our future hopes and expectations. A great number of evidences, each producing a high degree of probability, may have full as much weight as one single evidence much more pointed and strong. They are like so many different powers, all acting in the same direction, and combining their assistance and strength.

To those, who complain that probability is too low a degree of evidence to influence our conduct, it may be replied, that in all the affairs of this life, men are influenced  
by



by probability only, even in those affairs which they pursue with the greatest keenness and perseverance. In all the vast undertakings of this world, men frequently act from the very lowest probability. In war, in commerce, in all plans for increasing our fortune or our happiness, probability is the only evidence that we can have, and even *that* is frequently against our plans. Why then ought not probability to influence us in our religious concerns? when we are assured that we hazard nothing by acting; that we even gain by the very attempt. Virtue in many cases is its own reward; it is the highest ornament to our nature, and the surest road to worldly happiness.

In arguing, however, with unbelievers, when I call the evidence for a future state only probability, I wish not to make any unfair concessions to infidelity. We see from the preceding observations, that we are to expect only this kind of evidence, and to state it higher is to raise expectations which we cannot gratify; and this leads either to infidelity or despair. It does infinite

finite harm to the cause of religion to overrate its benefits : this is hanging out false hopes, of which our enemies never fail to take advantage. But the evidence for a future state, arising from revelation, has the same force and power, as for the other capital doctrines of the gospel. They all hang together. The same general evidence that supports one point supports the whole. If we believe that Jesus was the Messias, that he performed great works, that he died and rose again, we must of course admit a future and eternal world.

But in examining the arguments for futurity, we are supposed to have to deal with infidels, and, therefore, are not allowed to make the same advantage of revelation as when arguing with professed christians. But notwithstanding we are debarred of this advantage, we are still at liberty to make the best use of the doctrines and morals of the New Testament ; of the character of Jesus Christ and his disciples ; of the great change produced by the appearance of the Saviour of the world ; and of all the other facts that  
arise

arise from the New Testament, considered as a faithful history; and of such things, as must be granted by writers on both sides. Hence I am obliged to say, that, under these restrictions, the evidence deduced from revelation will be only probable.

Now with respect to the nature and character of these evidences; some are drawn from one source and some from another; some may be called original impressions, stamped upon the minds of all men, universally felt and acknowledged, that require no labour or research for their discovery, but seem kindly granted by Providence in a case where all men are interested. These are like natural instincts, and which serve as powerful guides to all such as have neither powers, nor opportunities to make further enquiries. We know, that such impressions exist, though we may not be able to trace their origin. We find, that with all mankind, there has existed a firm persuasion of a future existence. No man can satisfactorily account for the rise of this persuasion; and it is by no means necessary that we

CHAP. C should.



should. We find, moreover, among all men a desire and longing after immortality. These are all immediate and intuitive proofs of the future world. These and all such similar hints and expressions, which may be regarded as the language of nature, I have included under the general name of **INTRIMATIONS.**

But, besides these, we find another class of evidence; peculiarly adapted to men of leisure and enquiry, and to such as delight in the deductions of reason. These come in to aid and strengthen, in speculative minds, the former evidences, and render futurity still more credible. Such is the evidence drawn from the perfections of the Supreme Being; from our situation in this life; and from the unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in the present world.

And the last class will be the evidence from the doctrines, the morals, the characters and facts, recorded in revelation.

CHAP.

## CHAP. II.

*The general Consent of Mankind.*

**I**N arranging the evidence for a future existence, I begin, then, with that class, which makes the first and the earliest impression on the minds of men; which we acquire without reasoning, or the painful exercise of the mental powers: and at the head of this, I place the universal consent of all mankind. Wherever we find the human race, we find this belief universally prevalent, in all ages, in all countries, and in every degree of barbarity and civilization. In short, it must be as extensive as religion. It is of very little consequence to determine, from what source this belief has sprung. If we say, it is an original impression, stamp'd upon the minds of all men, by the Author of

nature; then this is to stamp the greatest credit upon the principle, or to make God the author of an universal delusion. There is no alternative. If we ascribe it entirely to the influence of education, yet still it must be granted, that there must be some principle in the mind of man, corresponding to this belief, that causes the doctrine to be so universally received, and so universally adopted, that no counter impression, no gloomy doctrine of infidelity, no, not even a wicked life, have been able totally to destroy or eradicate this divine seed. The human mind must be a soil congenial to the seeds of immortality. It greedily receives it, and causes it to strike a deep root. This is almost bringing us back to an impression stamp by the Deity himself. If God did not communicate this principle to the first parents of mankind, if he has not stamped it upon the mind with his own hand; yet he has formed us capable of receiving the impression; he has formed us to the hope of immortality; and this is a part of education, which no time,



time, nor false principle, can root from the heart.

But some will perhaps say, and it has been said by numbers, that this is a vulgar error, which has spread its influence so extensively over mankind. But there are some circumstances, which greatly distinguish it from every vulgar error that ever prevailed in the world. In the first place, it is a vulgar error that I should never wish to part with. It is a pleasing deception, and it is a deception productive of the most beneficial influence on mankind and in society. The belief of a future existence is the brightest ornament of our nature. Take this away from man, and what do you leave desirable or excellent behind? He sinks immediately in dignity, in virtue, and in hope. You tear asunder all the bonds of society, and rob man of every comfort. Destroy this vulgar error, and you take from virtue its most commanding influence; you take from great actions their noblest motive; you deaden every laudable ambition; and you rob the afflicted of their best consolation.

Would the benevolent man, the good man, or the patriot, wish to banish this delusion from the world, and to open the eyes of men to discern the truth, and to convince them that there is no soul, no future existence, no heaven, and no eternal mansions prepared for the wise and good? Glorious light! happy change! how greatly must mankind be indebted to such benevolent instructors, to such benefactors and friends!

But a *second* circumstance, that may distinguish it from every vulgar error and prejudice, is, that it is impossible to recollect one that ever maintained such a long and universal dominion among men. There have been many speculative errors, both in theology and philosophy, that have been pretty universally prevalent at one time or other among particular nations, yet even their limits have been much circumscribed when compared with the extent of the habitable earth; and their reputation has seldom continued much longer than the credit of their author. Like other fashions they have amused the speculative world for some  
4 short

short time, and then have been cast aside to make room for others of a different form and a later invention.

But the belief of a future existence is as universal as the rational nature, and seems to have taken its rise with the human race. It has maintained an undiminished influence amidst all the revolutions of science, politics, and religion. There is no nation ever yet discovered, however savage and ignorant in other respects, but what have had some notions of another life. Wherever men find religion and worship, there they will find a future existence; because futurity is the basis and support of every religion. If some travellers pretend to have discovered remote islands without any marks of religion, this is so contrary to human nature, and to long-established observation and experience, that we may reasonably suppose that the accounts of such travellers must be defective from want of accurate observation, from want of opportunity, and from an ignorance of their customs and language. And such pretended instances are so rare as to give



room for such a construction. We have no well-authenticated accounts of any such nations.

It will readily be allowed that the conceptions of another life, which have been entertained by a great number of men, are very gross, and mixed with much fable and absurdity; and, in many instances, have been modified to make them correspond with the ideas they have formed of happiness. But we are not concerned to maintain the accuracy of men's ideas and conceptions of that state, which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive*. The invisible world may afford much play for the wild imagination: but the very counterfeit happiness which men have forged points to some real happiness, from which all these counterfeits have been borrowed. Let the philosopher place his paradise in the regions of pure science and enlarged knowledge; let the Mahometan seek in the other world all those objects that delight the sensual and voluptuous mind; let the rude Indian flat-

ter

ter himself with an unbounded range for his hunting and fishing; it matters not; all these different ideas of happiness confirm this principle, that all mankind have believed in another life.

I do not think that it is an objection that deserves to be answered, that there have been found men, men also of science and enlarged minds, some men even of good reputation in other respects, that have openly refused to believe in futurity, and published their reasons to the world. Such objections are no further worth notice than for the effects they produce in honest and serious minds: for in the *first* place, I think it may often be doubted, whether such men are really sincere in what they advance. Some men are fond of paradoxes, that they may shew their talents in the explanation; and some are so vain, that to call the attention of the world to themselves, they will advance any absurdity, providing there may be something of novelty and ingenuity in the discovery, utterly regardless, how much it may disturb the peace of society, and wound  
the

the happiness of individuals. We are very certain also, that men often speak and reason contrary to their own feelings, and to their own principles; and there are many instances where it is easy to see men labouring and arguing against their own convictions. Affectation, pride, the love of singularity, the very spirit of contradiction, will too often lead men to maintain the grossest absurdities, and to support with vehemence such causes as they have happened to espouse. A man's avowed and his real principles are sometimes at variance: the heart often secretly denies what the lips advance.

But *secondly*, Is it not possible for a man to pervert, or rather to destroy, his real principles, by indulging their opposite; and by habits of life conformable to that indulgence? It is scarcely to be supposed that any man would wish to destroy his belief of a future existence, and to part with the noblest ornament of his nature, without some very good reason. But upon the supposition that any of the motives mentioned above should lead him



him to take this unhappy turn ; and, in support of this inclination, that he employ all the powers of his invention and reason, conducting, at the same time, his life upon the supposed truth of these assumed principles ; is it impossible but that in time he may weaken his belief of a future existence, and commence in some sense a real infidel ? Habits of belief, as well as habits of action, may certainly be acquired. But granting that such belief be real, and founded on the most perfect conviction, we may be allowed to say that it is a belief most unnatural, contrary to the wishes of the human mind and the general persuasion of the world ; therefore such exceptions may be regarded only as perversions of nature, not as an argument against the universality of the principle.

Hitherto, you see, I have been arguing upon the supposition that there were no other motives for men's refusing to believe in another life but what might accidentally arise from affectation, pride, the love of singularity, and the like. But every man  
knows

knows that there are other motives more cogent, which may induce men first to wish, and then to believe and to hope, that death would consume the whole of their existence, and that all perished with the body. If it be true that God will judge the world in righteousness, then the dread of a future reckoning may be reason sufficient for many men to wish that they may not survive the stroke of death; since God has declared that he will reward every man according to his works, and that they that have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. Is it to be wondered then that men of corrupt lives should flee to such a shelter? and rather than meet with an eternity of woe, should wish that they might be totally annihilated by death. The lives that they live compel them to embrace this frightful part. Situated as they are, this is their only comfort. Allowing then this to be a sufficient apology for a wicked man's embracing this gloomy doctrine, and trying to persuade himself of its truth;

truth; what are we to say in behalf of those, who labour, in their conversation and writings, to convince all men, that futurity is a delusion, and that heaven and hell are nothing more than the creatures of a wild and distempered imagination? They cannot plead, that they mean the happiness and comfort of the world; for a future life is the only comfort that many men have: many of the sons and daughters of affliction may, with great truth, adopt the language of Christ's disciples, and say: *If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.* The patrons then and supporters of such principles can be considered in no other light, than the murderers of the best hopes and comforts of men. In charity, I hope, that they cannot be governed by a spirit of malevolence; but surely they are chargeable with an unpardonable inattention to the peace and happiness of the world. It is impossible, I believe, to find out any reason for the part that they act, unless it be to procure some credit and security for their principles, in the number of those who embrace



embrace them. Pride, affectation, &c. may lead men to support many other absurdities; but it ought to be something much higher than these, that should justify a man for openly defending this part of infidelity.

The objections to the evidence of futurity arising from universal consent, which I have been just now considering, will, I am persuaded, have but little influence upon the minds of all serious and sensible men; but the one, which I am going to mention, seems much more important, and deserves a more attentive examination. Have not then the best of men, and the firmest believers in another life, frequent doubts and apprehensions about the reality of this principle; doubts, which cast a gloom on their serious and reflecting moments? How then are we to reconcile this with that universal consent, which I have been just now endeavouring to establish?

In answer to this, it is in the first place to be observed, that belief does not always imply assurance, and is therefore not to be expected

expected to exclude every doubt and mis-giving of mind, but leaves room for them all. Our appointment in this life is such, that our very doubts form a considerable part of our trial. Had every man a complete assurance of another life, and did futurity strike his mind with the same force of conviction, that the objects of sense commonly do, then there would be no room left for the exercise of patience and of hope, which constitute one great part of the trials of mankind in this world. We have no reason to expect an evidence of a future state, or indeed of any other principle, so powerful and commanding, as to exclude all kinds of doubt. Certainty we must not look for in this imperfect world. Neither are our actions any criterion of our belief. Men in general firmly believe, that a dissolute and debauched course of life will ruin their health and fortune, and cut short their days; yet this belief is seldom so powerful, as to determine them to sacrifice their inclinations to a sober, regular, and virtuous life.

But

But secondly, in the present uncertainty of the human faculties, we must expect, that good men will be liable to darkness and uncertainty. We cannot, whilst we are in this world, bear a copious stream of divine light. It would overpower our present faculties, and render us totally unfit for the necessary business and duties of life. We, perhaps, have all the knowledge, that we can bear, in our present situation; and the darkness, that surrounds us, we have every reason to believe to be one of the great proofs of the wisdom and goodness of our Creator. We know, that, in many cases, more knowledge would only serve to distress us. An insight into the future part of the present life; a perfect knowledge of the character of those we have about us; a more intimate knowledge even of our friends, and of their hearts, would greatly increase the miseries of this world. And it is almost certain, that too much evidence for the future world might prove equally intolerable and distressing, so long as we are confined to the present imperfect state.

Thirdly,



Thirdly, Great allowances should be made for the present prevailing humours and tempers even of good and wise men. We are strangely inconsistent with ourselves. At different times we see things in very different lights; and our feelings are equally wild and unaccountable as our views. Sometimes we feel ourselves equable and tranquil, and at other times low and easily agitated. Sometimes we feel bold and resolute, and fit for any undertaking; at other times timid and diffident, and alarmed by the murmuring stream, or the whispering breeze. And should it be thought wonderful, that our faith, our hope, and our joy, should depend, in some measure, on the present state and temper of our mind? But, notwithstanding all these ebbs and flows, a regard to futurity, in a good man, will ever preserve the ascendancy; the clouds will disperse; hope will brighten up; and a lively faith will direct his soul towards heaven.

Upon the whole, then, doubts and apprehensions of good men must be expected in such a state as the present. They form a

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part

part of their trial; and hence, to overcome these, greatly enhances the faith and patience of the righteous. Such doubts, when properly weighed, are no objection to the argument for a future state, arising from the general consent of all men. They speak only the language of revelation: *here we see through a glass, darkly, but then, face to face; here we know only in part, but then I shall know even as I am known: it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

## C H A P. III.

*The Desire of Futurity deeply impressed on the  
Breasts of all Men.*

THE argument for a future state, then, from the general consent of men, seems to be of that nature, as to be entitled to our respect and attention: and such a principle being so universal and prevalent, may be regarded as a call on men, to enquire into the other evidences, and to examine if there be sufficient ground to warrant us in adopting this doctrine as the foundation of our hopes and fears. And in following up the first class of evidence, I come now to consider that natural and strong desire of future existence, implanted in the breasts of all men, and which we may regard as an evidence for the existence of such a state. A principle so steady and universal must



have been given to us for some wise end. That this is a natural principle, we may infer from all men having it in possession. However different in capacity, in civilization, talents, education, and every thing, wherever we find human nature, and under whatever form, we always find a passionate desire for the continuance of existence. Men in general desire existence, even when loaded with misery. Death, as the extinction of being, is ever looked upon with horror and aversion. There is, to be sure, one case, where annihilation appears desirable. A guilty conscience dreads a future judgment; and hence men are induced, and strive, to believe, that all may end with the present world; that there may be no account, no God, and no eternity.

Before then they can be brought to this frightful, this unnatural desire, they voluntarily surrender all the honours and comforts of nature, every thing that can add to the real happiness and dignity of man. The longing after immortality, and the noble hopes of a future existence, will ever  
continue

continue vigorous and strong, so long as man abides by his Creator, and continues *to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* It is that horrid perversion of nature, that wishes to deny the existence of the Supreme Being, his providence, his goodness, and his love, that leads man to part with immortality, and all these hopes so honourable to man. Is it possible to find one, who has spent his life in dignity and true honour, who has been faithful and diligent in every duty, that ever wished or believed, that death would put a final period to all his hopes? A man must first dishonour his nature, by the irregularities of his life, or deform it by pride and affectation, before he can bring himself to believe, that his origin and destination are no higher than the brute that perishes; that they shall lie down alike in the dust to arise no more. It is greatly flattering then to this principle, that it is always found in company with the best part of mankind.

Existence is so desirable, that men wish to retain it almost on any condition. The most miserable seldom abandon this hope. The dread of falling into nothing makes death terrible, even to the wise and good. Providence, however, it must be allowed, in its infinite goodness, in general paves the way for our dissolution, by a number of tender attentions. The disease lessens greatly our attachment to life; the loss of strength and appetite, and every capacity of enjoyment, prepare us, step by step, for the awful period; so that all the strings, that tie us to life, being thus loosed, the last cord is generally cut without much pain or reluctance. The wisdom and goodness of Providence are equally seen in both cases. The desire of immortality, during health and strength, is assigned to us as a principle to influence our conduct, and to animate our ambition; and when the time of our dissolution approaches, Providence is equally wise and kind, in deadening every affection and desire of life, in order that we may  
be



be prepared to part with life without distress, and to take possession of that happiness, which has been *prepared* for good men, *before the foundation of the world.*

Now this passionate desire for existence renders it highly probable, that there must be some object corresponding to this desire, some eternal world, that so powerfully attracts every heart. That the future world is not an object of sense, that we cannot see it with our mortal eyes, is no objection to its existence. The longing after immortality points to a future world. In the works of nature, some secret attraction indicates the existence of some invisible agent. The magnetic needle assures us, that there is some corresponding object, to which it turns, sufficiently powerful to produce this attraction; and, in whatever quarter of the world placed, it always directs itself to this center. So, in like manner, the soul, wherever situated, is ever stretching to a future existence as the center and object of all its wishes, and towards which all its desires are directed. The all-wise Creator

has made nothing in vain. Every appetite, every affection implanted in man, is placed there for some wise and benevolent purpose; they are intended to answer some good end in the constitution of our nature. And must there not then be some object in the universe, some future world, which all men so earnestly seek after? For what other purpose could such a principle be planted so deep in the human heart? There is, perhaps, not a single plant, nor insect, in nature, but what is intended to answer some wise purpose; all is useful; every thing in its proper place. And can we then suppose, that in the most perfect of all God's works here below, we find a principle deeply implanted, and universally prevalent, without any object corresponding to this principle?

I know it will be replied, that the existence of this principle answers one good and wise purpose. The desire of a future existence, under the belief that we are accountable creatures, serves as a check to vice, becomes also a powerful incentive to  
noble

noble and praise-worthy actions. This end it does undoubtedly answer. But then, upon the supposition that there were no future world, is not this maintaining that the all-wise and righteous Governor of the world is under the necessity of employing a strong delusion for the management of his creatures? that we are compelled to virtue by the force of a false principle? This is to bring down the Supreme Being to the level of those weak and unprincipled statesmen, who deem every thing right and expedient, that can promote their selfish views. What a horrid imputation of weakness! Must the all-perfect God employ fraud and crooked policy to carry forward his great designs? Behold! the light in which such doctrines place the greatest and the best of beings! He is represented not only as weak, but employing low craft and cunning to impose on his miserable creatures; hanging out false hopes to entice and deceive man. I cannot see how we can extricate ourselves from such consequences, if, after finding in ourselves such strong desires after futurity,



futurity, engraven on our hearts by the author of our existence, all proves in the end a delusion. How can we reconcile such doctrines to the belief of a God infinitely wise and good? But the truth is, the maintainers of these principles do not much interest themselves in supporting the honour and dignity of the divine government. Grant a future world, and every thing is proper; every thing is in its place. There is in man an earnest desire of a future existence; and there is a glorious object corresponding to this principle. The gospel assures us, that the soul is immortal; that *the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*. Here then is nothing superfluous or vain. The government of the Supreme Being is here perfectly justified. The desire of immortality, which discovers itself so early, and with so much power, is wisely assigned us to be a strong motive to virtuous conduct, to preserve man from every thing base and mean, and to inspire him with the hopes of immortal glory.

But

But this desire is not limited to ourselves; we wish to perpetuate all our virtuous friendships; that none of these, who are so dear to us here, should be ever lost; but that our friends should be immortal. These wishes of nature vent themselves in a thousand different expressions; pictures, sepulchral monuments, superb tomb-stones, pillars, pyramids, medals, biography, history, and in numberless less splendid, and even trifling mementos, all declaring the universal wish of nature, that we and our friends may live for ever; and many that have been long consigned to their silent mansions, live still fresh in the remembrance and love of their friends. When death dissolves these pleasing connections, the most distressing circumstance would be the apprehension, that they were for ever lost; that we should never meet again; that our friendship would never more be renewed. The belief of their future existence, and that we shall meet one another again, is a laudable principle, and in a high degree favourable to virtue. It must  
prove

prove the spring of many glorious actions; it may preserve from much meanness; it is the source also of much consolation, when every other consolation fails us. This belief disposes us to part with virtuous friends with more composure, and it sheds a pleasing resignation over us, in the prospect of our own dissolution. Death, under this view, is regarded as a friendly messenger, kindly sent to deliver us from the miseries of this world, and to re-unite us with all those whose friendship was so dear and valuable to us whilst here. We see how these hopes animated the virtuous heathens. Cicero introduces the elder Cato, when arguing in behalf of a future existence, delivering himself in the following animated strain: "O! glorious day! when I shall  
" retire from this low and sordid scene, to  
" associate with the divine assembly of de-  
" parted spirits; and not with those only,  
" whom I just now mentioned, but with  
" my dear Cato, that best of sons, and  
" most valuable of men . . . His soul did  
" not desert me, but still looked back upon  
" me



“ me in its flight to those happy mansions,  
“ to which he was assured I should one day  
“ follow him. If I seemed to bear his  
“ death with fortitude, it was by no means  
“ because I did not most sensibly feel the  
“ loss I had sustained; it was because I  
“ supported myself with the consoling re-  
“ flection, that we could not long be sepa-  
“ rated.”

There is scarcely any one who has not felt, at some time or other, the influence of this principle calling forth in his soul some pleasing hopes, when all other hopes are gone. Who is there that has felt the pangs of separation from those he loved, but has felt consolation from the hopes of meeting again?

The bestowing upon us then such ardent wishes is giving us a miserable portion, if all these hopes be a delusion. Can we ever suppose that a God of infinite goodness could thus delight to tantalize such miserable wretches? If there be no hereafter, would not we have been formed a more perfect work, to have had no knowledge  
and

and no wish beyond the grave? We might have been formed without any such desire. We might have been so constituted, as that death should be no object of terror, and immortality an unnatural desire: and, when earthly friends were taken from us by death, we might have surrendered without reluctance all the pleasure we had in them; and the same stroke, that put a period to their existence, might have extinguished all our wishes and desires. We might have been formed so, as in an instant to have removed our affections from the breathless corpse, and placed them upon some other object.

Such a constitution, so far as we are able to judge, might have been more consistent with our happiness, and answered all the ends of our appointment here, as short-lived and uncertain creatures.

But if there is an hereafter, all is beautiful and wise. Every thing points to it; and our deceased virtuous friends are so many additional ties to a good life. They are calling upon us to live so, that we may meet

meet again in the mansions of glory. They are so many additional pledges, that Providence has taken from us for the security of our faith and patience. And in proportion as we value them, so ought we to watch and strive, that we may have a triumphant meeting in those blessed regions, where death shall never again interfere to tear asunder our hearts, where friendship will be secure, and our affections everlasting.



## C H A P. IV.

*The restless Nature, and the noble Powers and  
Faculties, of Man.*

**T**HE two evidences of a future state, that I have already examined, seem wisely adapted to the bulk of mankind, who not having abilities, or leisure, or a proper turn of mind, for such enquiries, generally take up with the first impressions; and these impressions, stamped by the hand of nature, prove as strong and powerful in the government of life, as all the evidences arising from the deductions of reason. Men act from feeling much oftener than they do from reason, and, in all points of duty, our first feelings are, perhaps, the least erroneous. When men begin to reason, in matters of duty, it is very common to find an excuse for some transgression, or an apology  
for

for some neglect. Conscience is the moral feeling; and the first intimations of conscience are always the purest. Our natural feelings point out to us a future state; and it is owing to the neglect of these feelings, and the abuse of reason, that men become infidels.

The strong desire then of a future existence, and the universality of this principle, previous to all reasoning, prepare the mind for attending to the other evidences, and dispose every good man to receive with joy and gratitude life and immortality brought to light by the gospel. Had we not been prepared by these original impressions, all other arguments would have proved ineffectual to produce conviction. But though these evidences or intimations may be sufficient ground of enquiry to men of speculative minds, yet they are, I will acknowledge, far from being complete and perfectly satisfactory; and, were men left to these evidences alone, they would not be sufficient to support a doctrine so honourable to our nature, and so closely interwoven

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with

with our best interests. Providence has therefore furnished us with a number of others, so circumstanced, that though they cannot be said to exclude every doubt, and to produce a full conviction, yet are sufficient to determine men in their actions; to be the source of innumerable comforts; and to animate us to glorious undertakings.

And this leads me to the *second class* of evidences, the evidences, which arise from the deductions of reason, and which seem furnished by a kind Providence for the satisfaction of men of leisure, and an inquisitive turn of mind. The evidences of religion, and of that part in particular, are happily diversified to suit the different tastes and capacities of man, and by that beautiful variety to seize upon persons of every capacity, as each finds some argument corresponding to his peculiar inclination and taste. Sometimes an address is made to our fears, at other times to our hopes: there are evidences directed to our honour, to our interest and ambition: there are evidences,



dences, which strike immediately and without much previous reasoning; and there are others, which are connected with observation and facts, or with some of the principles of the human mind; and of consequence require attention, deep research, and a proper application to feel their due energy and force.

In this *second class* I begin, then, with that evidence, which arises from the consideration of the noble powers and faculties of the human mind; faculties of such a nature, that their very existence seems to indicate, that they were intended for something greater than this earth.

In the first place some of these faculties seem unnecessary and superfluous, if we were intended only for the present life, and even destructive of our happiness and enjoyment. As inhabitants of this earth only, we should certainly have been much happier, without these hopes and fears and desires, and that longing after immortality. We might have been enabled to perform all the duties of the present life, without

that high degree of reason, and that noble inventive faculty, which are the pride and ornament of man. That instinct, which directs the lower animals to make proper provision for themselves and offspring, might have been sufficient to have guided and to have prompted man to all the duties, that are required of him as a mortal creature. The knowledge of a Supreme Being and his perfections, that inquisitive principle, that leads us to search out and examine the works of the Creator, that not content with what we meet with in this world, raises man to connect himself with other worlds, and to search after those laws, which govern the universe, that excites men to pursue with avidity more and more knowledge, are all unnecessary and even hurtful to him, if he be only the creature of a day, the short-lived inhabitant of this earth. That wisdom and goodness, which he sees and adores, must all soon be lost to him, when he and all his faculties are extinguished in the everlasting darkness of death. To make provision for the immediate wants of nature,

ture, to procure food and to provide proper habitations, require none of these high powers, which carry man beyond his present happiness. Chained down to the present existence, his wishes should have been confined to the present spot and to the enjoyments of the day, for he has no concern and no interest in other worlds, and futurity is not his portion. For what use also are all these natural fears implanted in his breast? Conscience is every now and then giving to him uneasy alarms, and tormenting him with awful forebodings. To what point are all these forebodings directed? It is the language of nature pointing out to us an hereafter, and telling man, that his existence and all his powers must extend beyond the grave. If there be no hereafter, such a principle can serve no other wise and good purpose, but to distress man and to embitter all his enjoyments.

According to the wise appointment of our Creator, to the other animals no more powers are given, than a proper share of such faculties as may best suit them for



their stations; and to enable them to provide for themselves and to propagate their kind. Every thing is duly proportioned to their states, and, under the direction of these faculties, they never transgress the limits appointed to them by nature. To some are given strength, to others swiftness, to a third cunning: some protect themselves by their ferocity and courage, and others avoid danger by their natural timidity. Nothing appears superfluous, nothing in vain: they live in perfect obedience to their proper nature, they know nothing, they care for nothing further. Down from the sagacious elephant to the meanest insect, such a degree of knowledge is shared out, that each is always in its proper station, following exactly its proper instinct. One seeks one food, and another seeks another; one partakes of one pleasure, and another is in search of a different; and each confined to its narrow sphere looks for nothing beyond: all seem happy, all in their place. The birds flit along in the pure air, the fishes occupy their watery habitation, and the ox  
grazes

grazes in his rich pasture: they know of no greater happiness: they envy not the sumptuous banquets, or the rich palaces of man. So far as we are capable of judging, they have no forebodings of misery, no stings of conscience, no longings after another existence, and no apprehensions, and no fears of death. They enjoy the present, without any anxiety or disquietude about what is to come. But man is never content, he is never at rest. There are no limits to his knowledge, to his pleasures, to his curiosity, or to his enjoyments. Give him all that he can wish for, all that he can crave, he is never satisfied; still stretching forward to something not yet attained, he is ever restless, ever full of wishes and desires, and pushed onwards by an insatiable ambition.

And this dissatisfaction is not peculiar to mean and to selfish tempers, but is ever seen the strongest in the noblest minds, only pursuing it in a different channel and direction. Whilst the grovelling spirit is eagerly following this bent of nature, in the

search of wealth and sensual gratification; the purer soul is grasping after more knowledge, more mental enjoyments, and rising above this earth, is opening its little arms to embrace the universe and the great God himself! But there is nothing in this lower world, that can satisfy the immensity of man's desires, or fill up the void in his breast. When he arrives at the summit of his wishes, he is no more satisfied, than at the first setting forward. Riches and wealth cannot satiate the meanest mind; and in the nobler soul, any point of knowledge, when once attained, soon loses all its relish and all its charms: we are compelled by the restlessness of our nature to be constantly looking abroad for new enjoyments and new pleasures. Does not this then say, that there is nothing here below sufficient to gratify the immensity of his desires; that there is no object in this world corresponding to his enlarged faculties; that this earth is not his home; that there must be another state, where all these noble powers shall arrive to full perfection, where his most boundless



boundless virtuous wishes shall be fully gratified?

Whilst here, and upon the supposition that this earth is his all, he has faculties not only more than necessary for his situation, but which in a great measure disqualify him for his present enjoyment; faculties, which prove even hurtful. His vast hopes, his insatiable ambition, his restless curiosity, his unconquerable love of variety; and then the succession of sudden disgust, of dissatisfaction with every enjoyment, which immediately push him forward to some new, to some untried object, all tell us, that this is no more but the beginning of his existence, that there must be another world, where all shall be in harmony, where he shall meet with objects too vast for his conceptions, and beings perfectly pure and eternal.

Upon the supposition, that there is nothing for man beyond the grave, all is mystery, all is darkness; but allowing man to be eternal, every thing is natural, perfectly easy and accountable. He has faculties, that fit him for this earth; but his restlessness,

ness, his dissatisfaction, and his insatiable desires tell, that he was formed for a much higher existence. Nothing is then superfluous, nothing in vain. Upon this supposition, it is consistent both with wisdom and goodness, that he should be uneasy whilst here, to prevent him from placing his affections too much on this earth, to prevent him from resting satisfied with it as his home, to be pushing him constantly forwards towards the perfection of his nature and his happiness. I know no other plan to justify the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being, than this hypothesis. Allowing man to be formed for another existence, he is in the very situation here, that he should be, restless, inquisitive, stretching ever forward from object to object, aspiring after higher degrees of knowledge and happiness, rising constantly upwards towards immortality.

Allowing this earth to be a state preparatory for another; all appears wise and good: his darkness, his miseries, his uneasiness, all serve to keep his faculties constantly awake to the true end of his appointment, and his everlasting hopes.

C H A P.

## C H A P. V.

*Man distressed with the Dread of Death, and the precarious Nature and Uncertainty of his Life.*

**B**UT there is another remarkable circumstance, which distinguishes man from every other animal, a principle in itself tormenting, and which must prove to him the source of continual mortification, if there be not another world. He is perpetually haunted with the dread of death, and the constant apprehension of his dissolution. The apprehension of death never disturbs the present enjoyments of the lower animals. The laborious ox and the innocent sheep walk before their murderers to the house of slaughter, ignorant of their fate, and without betraying any signs of fear, or any symptoms of apprehension. They are



sensible of pain, and alive also to some of the tenderest affections; but they never look forward with horror to that period, when they shall be no more: they are utter strangers to the nature and effects of death.

Man, on the contrary, is perpetually haunted with this spectre. He sees death in every disease, in every accident, and at every age. In many cases he supports the stroke itself with more resolution and fortitude, than the distant prospect. There is in all men a natural horror of death: this horror is increased by a number of circumstances, but is rendered unsupportable by an alarming sense of guilt. *The spirit of a man may support his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* In this respect man appears a strange contradiction: he has implanted in his breast a powerful love of life, and naturally the utmost horror of dissolution. Between these two he is sometimes dreadfully tost. Misery, disappointment, and the stings of remorse, drive him towards death; but his natural horror of this great event,  
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his apprehensions of a future reckoning, and the awful forebodings of the justice of God, push him back again upon existence: till the mind becomes unhinged, harrassed, and at last raised to phrenzy and madness, he rushes from the presence of man, to the presence and justice of the great God! The lower animals are subject to none of these fears, and to none of these terrible agitations. The good man, in general, meets death with more composure and courage; but the very best are by no means exempt from this natural fear.

Now, why should there be this difference between the brute creation and man, and a difference much to the disadvantage of the lord of this lower world? Must it not be, because man alone is greatly interested in this event? His natural and strong apprehensions and fears, his shuddering at the thought, his paleness at the warning, all bespeak the interest that he has in death; all say, that it is to him an entrance upon a new and untried state of existence. Were there not something in death of the highest importance,

importance, infinite goodness would never torment man with such apprehensions. It is an intimation to him to be constantly preparing, to be diligent in every duty, that he may resign his life at last with dignity, and look forward with pleasing hope. A God of infinite goodness and love could never take pleasure in torturing poor mortals with unnecessary apprehensions and fears, and thus checking and terrifying man in the midst of all his enjoyments. But upon the supposition, that this is no more but the beginning of his existence, and an entrance upon an eternal hereafter, to be decided by his behaviour here, we see the greatest wisdom and propriety in rendering death to man an awful change. This must rouse him to vigilance and care, to the most vigorous exertions, when every other argument will lose its weight.

It may be added to this argument, that of all creatures the life of man is the most precarious and uncertain. The other animals, particularly the wild and untamed animals, in general, live out the period assigned them  
by



by nature, unless cut off by the cruel hand of man. They are exposed to much fewer dangers and diseases, liable to fewer accidents, and, in general, answer the end appointed to them by Providence. But man, on the contrary, is never safe. The one half and more of our species are cut down in the tender years of infancy. Some just open their eyes upon life; they immediately shut them, and open them no more. Numbers are cut down in their full vigour and strength, *when their breasts are full of milk, and their bones are moistened with marrow*: very few arrive to the full standard of human life, to their threescore and four-score years. And during the whole progress of this precarious life, we are constantly meeting with some warning, some affliction to detach our affections from the things of this earth. Our dearest friends are every now and then taken from us, and those, in whom our whole happiness depends, torn from our embraces. To these may be added bodily afflictions, infirmities, bad health, the loss of fortune, all the props  
and

and supports of this life. Every thing seems contrived to check our enjoyments: every thing is calling upon us not to fet our affections on this world, or the things of this world: every thing tells us that this is not our home, that we belong to another country, and that for that state we ought to be making an everlasting provision. If this earth be our all, why are we not happy? Where are the proofs of the love and goodness of the best of Beings? This noblest work, he, for whom all other things are made, is the constant prey of affliction, disappointment, disease, and death.

CHAP.

## C H A P. VI.

*None of the Human Faculties ever arrive here to their full Perfection, and the best Affections are never fully gratified.*

**I**N following up this evidence, we may next observe, that none of the human faculties ever arrive here to the perfection of which they seem capable, and that all the attainments of men in this world are greatly imperfect. This seems then to be a foreign, an unkindly soil, not capable of bringing this noble plant to its destined perfection. His reason and judgment never attain to any degree of certainty. They are ever bewildered, and plunging from error to error. This is seen in all the systems of philosophy or science, that were ever framed by man. What is built up by one generation, only serves for the succeeding to de-

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molish;



molish; upon the ruins of which they raise another pile of errors. Sometimes these buildings appear for a while firm and durable: all men acknowledge the beauty and strength of the structure. But some daring genius is every now and then arising, and, by the help of some new force or later invention, assails these strong buildings; and, by the breach that he makes, lets in a flood of enemies; and all is soon levelled with the ground. Men then begin to wonder how they have been so long imposed upon: they are astonished at their ignorance and their tame submission.

In the review of the destruction of human systems, the weakness and folly of human reason become a subject of lamentation. The system of Aristotle long held an extensive empire in the world; and, passing by a number of less extensive and less splendid buildings, which in different parts, and at different times, were raised in opposition, this was at last destroyed by the philosophy of Descartes; and this in its turn was soon overpowered by the works of the

the great and immortal Newton. How long this may hold possession of the philosophical world, it is not easy exactly to foretel; but as it is now attacked and exposed in several quarters, like all others, it must have its end; and its destruction will be a more striking mark of the imbecility of the human faculties.

Let us not, however, be too much discouraged with this gloomy prospect; for their fall gives birth to pleasing hopes. These noble powers, which we behold here only in their infancy and amidst much imperfection, will in another state be carried forward to that strength and perfection and clearness, for which they were originally intended. Let man's thirst of knowledge, therefore, never be quenched, let his curiosity never be gratified: these inherent desires bespeak the original intention and design: the present is only his infancy, his state of darkness; the other world will be a world of light, of truth, and of perfection.

The best affections also of the human heart never meet here with any object, that

can afford compleat satisfaction. Love, the noblest of the passions, is always much cramped in its exercise. The most perfect of human characters have in them always such a mixture of weaknesses and imperfections, as never fail to check our esteem and love. We love often those, whom we cannot perfectly esteem. This love cannot be durable. And, again, we meet with such innumerable instances of deceit, treachery, and wickedness, that hatred and revenge often rapidly succeed the sincerest love. When we attempt to fix our minds on nobler objects, and such as can fill the immense desires of the human heart; when we raise our minds to the contemplation of the all-perfect Being, or confine them to the image of his moral perfections, as reflected in the life of Jesus Christ, we find there the weakness of the human faculties; we find ourselves encompassed with so much darkness, that we never can perfectly discern these glorious characters: and even in the highest ecstasies of divine love, this world is ever presenting itself, and dragging down  
our



our affections to itself. Thus our love must ever be very imperfect, and very incomplete. The same may be said of our gratitude. Numbers of selfish principles are continually interposing and mixing with our grateful affections; envy, jealousy, pride, and all the other attendants and appendages of this miserable state. Human nature can never appear here to full advantage. Some singular characters are now and then placed before us in a high degree of perfection, and present man as the noblest work of God; but a great part, perhaps, of their excellence may be owing to the artful concealment of their true characters.

And must then all these buddings of perfection and of love be for ever lost? Will these promising plants be never reared to their full growth and beauty? Is it not more probable to believe, that they will be at last transplanted to a clime more congenial to their nature; that all imperfections will be removed from them; that love and gratitude will meet with the most perfect objects, and all the pure affections

of the human heart find their full exercise in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

## CHAP. VII.

### *Man formed for Religion.*

**B**UT there is another principle in human nature, which distinguishes man from all the other creatures with which we are acquainted, and which evidently points to another and a more perfect life. Man is formed for religion. There is a natural principle of religion in the human breast, that however perverted or disguised, to whatever baser purposes it may be abused, still leads to the persuasion, that this earth cannot be the only scene of our existence.

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The religious principle pervades men of all ranks and characters, and every different state of society; so that it seems as natural to man, as his other faculties and affectoins. Now this principle must be superfluous and unnecessary, if all die with the body. In every man there is a moral principle, which sirs supreme judge of every action, and pronounces a sentence of approbation or disapprobation according to our different lives. This moral principle discovers itself in a variety of manners, and becomes the source of great pleasure, or the cause of much uneasiness and pain. The heart-felt satisfaction that a good man enjoys upon his reflecting on any worthy action that he has performed, or even in the bare recital of a noble and generous deed performed by another, is above all the other pleasures of life both in nature and degree. It extends to a boundless distance, and communicates its virtues to an unmeasurable extent.

There is an unspeakable satisfaction in the bare reading of a benevolent and good action, which every sensible heart must feel;



and which feelings increase with the excellence and improvement of our natures. Read but the history of our Lord's life, and his acts of compassion and benevolence; the heart feels an unexpressible delight in the bare contemplation of disinterested goodness; and how much more delightful must it be in its exercise! Read the parable of the good Samaritan, you seem to feel with him, and to partake of his joys. This is a reward which goodness enjoys even in this life, and is strongly expressive of the rule on which we must act if we expect heaven.

On the other hand, this moral principle stamps the strongest disapprobation on guilt. The serious recollection of it is ever accompanied with remorse, shame, and horror; that we wish, if possible, to bury the action in eternal oblivion, and to tear it from our remembrance.

From whence proceed these horrors? It is not the fear of man, for they accompany the most secret as well as the most public guilt; they torment the tyrant, who is out of the reach of human justice; they excite  
pain

pain and uneasiness for those very actions, for which human laws provide no punishment. Is not this, then, the voice of God within us, his warning voice, pronouncing beforehand his righteous and just judgments? They tell us, in a language that is natural and plain, that verily *there is a reward for the righteous*, and a punishment for the wicked; for man is immortal.

Unless there be another life, why are we formed religious creatures? why are we made capable of knowing God, of loving him, trusting in him, and resigning ourselves to his disposal? We might have performed all the duties of this life, and passed through it with tolerable composure, without this sublime knowledge. We have but little concern with him that made the universe; we have but a poor interest in him, who is possessed of all perfection, and whom we are taught to call the father and the friend of man, if we have nothing beyond the grave. Why are we formed in some measure to see and know him, if we are never to know him more perfectly, and if

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we are never to receive fuller communications of his goodness and of his love? Every thing tells to us that there is a God; but that God is nothing to us, if we be only the creatures of a day. The heavens say there is a God; the earth says there is a God; our own frame, the order, the regularity, the utility of every part, our mercies, our judgments, all speak loudly, all proclaim to us the same thing. But why all this instruction? to what wise purpose? what is its object? Our capacity of discerning, of reading, or of hearing all these voices, which we enjoy greatly superior to every other creature, assure us that the whole of this instruction is principally addressed to us. Yet for what purpose, unless we are peculiarly interested? This leads us, then, to the conclusion:—Verily there must be a future state, for which we are designed, and which has all this instruction for its object.

Whenever I see the sun rolling round in full majesty, and the moon in her brightness; whenever I see the glowing firma-





## C H A P. VIII.

*The high Rank and Station which Man occupies in this World.*

**T**HE existence of the future world may be further inferred from the high rank and station, in which we find man here below. I speak not here of his superior nature and faculties, his reason, his imagination, the moral principle, and his other distinguishing powers, but of the place he occupies among the other creatures of God. Man is unquestionably the first of all God's works on this earth. All things seem subservient to him, formed for his nourishment, his convenience, or his pleasure. To him is assigned the dominion over the beasts of the earth, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea. This earth is fitted up for him as the principal guest. For him the

the sun shines, the heavens roll, and the various seasons come round in regular succession. The different animals minister to his food, his clothing, or his happiness. The birds cheer him with their pleasing songs, and all nature is carrying forward her great work for man, the lord of this lower world. His pre-eminence is visible in a thousand instances. His superior powers enable him to convert to his use or pleasure, not only the different parts of inanimate matter, but also a great variety of beasts, of birds, and of fish. The land, the water, and the air, furnish him with an infinite variety of food: the most distant climates contribute their various luxuries to his pleasure: the birds and beasts, as well as the earth, produce for him the gayest clothing and the richest colours: the bowels of the earth yield gems and precious stones for our ornament; and the sea also delivers up her precious dyes and her beautiful pearls and corals. Thus, whilst each animal finds every thing proper for it within the narrow circle to which it is confined, man  
collects



collects tribute from every part of the globe, from land, from water, from the surface and from the bowels of the earth. All these are proofs of his high rank and of his wide and superior dominion. The animal creatures pay to him also an involuntary homage and service in token of his superiority. Even the most wild and savage find their ferocity repressed, and their courage fail them in the presence of man. The human eye and countenance command awe and respect, whenever properly exerted. Nothing but self-defence, and the cravings of extreme hunger, do ever provoke them to make an attack upon man. Though far superior to him in strength, swiftness, and courage, yet whenever man appears, they confess their inferiority by their flight, even before it is possible for them to be acquainted with the advantages he derives from his wisdom and the instruments he employs. Under his management, almost every animal becomes tame and tractable, and subservient to his purposes. In a collection even of wild beasts, the accurate observer may

may derive some instruction, and the pious mind discover even some evidences for his religion.

You see the monarch of the desert acknowledging a superior lord, in the obedience and respect he pays to his savage keeper: the royal tyger laying aside, in his presence, his fierceness and his pride, and suffering himself to be stroked by his hand and directed by his voice: the rough and clumsy bear, in obedience to his command, imitating, in his awkward manner, the steps and motions of the nimble dance. In all these things you may see the dignity and the high rank of man. He is their lord, and this world was formed for him.

In taking a survey of the different animals, you may see further marks of the superiority of man; and how every part seems intended by the great Creator to minister to his comfort, his instruction, or use. The different animals are not only wisely fitted for their proper climates, but in their constitution, form, manners, and way of living, you will find something that  
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has a respect to man. The ponderous elephant, formed for supporting the most enormous burthens, to carry castles and men upon his back, is likewise furnished by nature for sustaining long the want of water and of food. He is intelligent, friendly, and obedient, and easily understands the language of the different passions of his guide. He attaches himself closely to his friend, and assists even in laying the burthen upon himself. The camel also is a most useful and tractable animal; and without such aids the deserts would be impassable, and no intercourse between those nations that live on their borders. We know also the unspeakable benefits of the rein-deer in the frozen regions of the north. Without this most serviceable animal, such miserable climes must be destitute of inhabitants. This useful creature is their all. Whilst itself lives upon the wretched moss, it furnishes man with food and clothing; it transports him with unconceivable swiftness to the greatest distance, through wild and untractable forests and mountains, the regions  
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of eternal cold and snow. In the more temperate climates, where nature seems to have dealt more kindly with man, yet what wretched creatures should we be without the assistance and friendship of the brute creation! For the benefit of man, God *hath given to the horse strength*, and has clothed his neck with thunder. He hath bestowed upon him that noble courage, that he *mocketh at fear*, and *never turneth his back upon the sword*; that *he swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage*, nor *regardeth the sound of the trumpet*. And yet this generous animal is of the most tractable temper. He submits to every thing: he performs every thing in obedience to the commands of man.

The ox also and the cow not only provide us with the richest food, but lend their ready assistance to the cultivation of the earth, and to raise up the richest harvest of grass and of corn. The innocent sheep brings in her kind tribute of the best food and clothing for ungrateful man.

Were we to run over the various ani-

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mals,

mals, and the different parts of the earth, we could scarcely find any animal, or any part, but what had some immediate or remote regard to man. Can we then contemplate all nature thus directing her attention to the human race, and forbear to stop and wonder? Lord, what is man! If he be only what he appears to be on this earth, all is a mystery. He comes forth the most helpless of creatures; in his infancy he is constantly exposed to misery, and has to pass through a long train of diseases, making successive attacks upon his life: for fear of death, his whole life is subject to bondage. His pre-eminence is often the source of his misfortunes. His sensibility, his lively imagination, his reason, his enquiries into futurity, his apprehensions, all help to increase his sorrows and his pains. How then are we to account for all that greatness and dignity, that dominion, that he possesses over the other creatures?

Here is a magnificent world fitted up for his habitation, the glorious canopy of heaven for his covering, and all creatures living for man.

man. If there be another world, if man be destined for immortality, then we find him a being worthy of all the grandeur bestowed on his first state: all is in perfect unison; nothing superfluous; every thing is wisely contrived to lead his mind upwards to his God.

But suppose that he is not; suppose him to be only the creature of a day, and that all perishes with this life; conscience then is assigned him only for a tormentor, to disturb his enjoyments; his rational nature and immortal hopes only a delusion; the knowledge that he has of the Supreme Being answers no other end but to amuse him as an idle speculation, to fill him with false love, or to distress him with vain fears; and the pre-eminence assigned him by his Creator, nothing more but a mock majesty, from which he is soon to be tumbled into the darkness of everlasting death. These are the conclusions that irreligion warrants, and the comforts that it gives to man.



## C H A P. IX.

*The Connection in which this Earth stands with the other Parts of the Universe, the Knowledge we have of this Connection, and our Capacity of contemplating God's Works in general.*

**A**NOTHER step will lead us to another evidence in favour of a future state, from the light of nature. The visible frame of this world, and the connection that this earth stands in with the other parts of the universe, affords strong intimations and a presumptive evidence of a future state. The heavens and the earth are connected, we are certain, by some very close and intimate laws; and in such a manner as to persuade us, that we are only a separate member of one great and universal whole. Of this God himself is the center, and the different

different globes of this visible universe are but members and parts. The more we know of the works of the Creator, and the deeper our researches, the more evidence have we to convince us of this capital and important truth. This acknowledged, this visible connection gives us the greatest room to believe, that there may be other bonds of union and other ties, that hereafter may be more fully revealed. The evidence is of an increasing nature, and will keep pace with our discoveries of God's works.

Some great natural law unites us with the heavens, and renders this earth a part of the grand universal system: and may we not from hence suppose, that by some other law of God's providence, we may be united with the rational and immortal family of the higher mansions above? At present we cannot tell what we are. All is involved in darkness and in obscurity; so that with all the best helps that Providence or Grace bestows upon us, we are in a state of conjecture and of doubt, incapable of piercing those thick clouds which encompass us, and

of telling what we shall be hereafter. But, I believe, the more, we know of the works of God, and the more honesty and sincerity we discover in our researches, the greater reason shall we find to be persuaded, that we shall be removed to another world, at the conclusion of our present existence.

And it is greatly to our comfort and encouragement, that scripture and the works of nature illustrate and confirm one another. The word of God, and the promises of God, and the discoveries of the gospel, tell us that we are greatly interested in another state of existence. Now our connection with the visible universe intimates the very same thing. The laws of nature unite this earth with other worlds; and may there not also be some union and connection with their inhabitants? distant, perhaps, and obscure now, but may appear clear and certain when more light shall be let in upon us, and when our minds shall be duly prepared for such important discoveries. Scripture intimates to us, that this world is a



state of trial, and as such is an imperfect state; but at the same time, that it is a state preparatory to another, where all imperfection shall be done away, where all virtuous enjoyments shall be perfect and complete. Now all natural appearances speak to us the same language. This earth is but a very small and imperfect part of this universe, but it is intimately connected with other important parts. What proportion, what small proportion does it bear to the other works of God, even to those very works which we now see? It is nothing near so large as a great number of those stars, with which the firmament is adorned. For aught that we can prove to the contrary, it may also be among the most imperfect of God's works. But from its union and connection with the other parts, we may consider it as a nursery for rational creatures, to train them up, until they be fit to be transplanted into some happier clime, some immortal garden of God. In this imperfect state, he has given us many proofs of his wisdom and power, and some tastes

also of his goodness and love. But all these must be imperfect on account of the imperfection of our situation. Still he has given sufficient to rouse our hopes, and to excite our desires. This earth is full of his goodness, and every thing that surrounds us is calculated to inspire us with sentiments of duty and obedience, and to beget in us the most lively expectations and hopes of the most complete manifestations of his goodness and love, in a more perfect and better world.

What other great end, with respect to man, can we suppose the Creator had in view, by forming such a world, and placing man as its principal inhabitant; in making us, in some measure, so sensible of its beauties and advantages, so capable of tracing out the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Architect? Can we suppose, that we are no further interested in that wisdom and goodness, than merely as spectators, or the short-lived inhabitants of this earth? Shall we see them now so brightly, and never more partake of them? On  
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this supposition, we are here like creatures confined to a barren wilderness, or rather a deep and gloomy vale; and all around us there are pleasing fields, bright sunshine, rich pastures, ever-blooming gardens, and blessed inhabitants, regions which we must never enter, hung out to us; and we endued with strength of sight to see, and hearts to feel them; only that they may excite vain and tantalizing hopes, and help to deepen that gloom, and to thicken that darkness, in which we are now condemned to dwell.

Can God thus sport with the happiness of his creatures? can he thus take pleasure to torment man? and through those very means too, which we are taught to believe to be the glory and ornament of our nature? How much more agreeable is it to the wisdom and goodness of God, to suppose that all the goodness and love, which are displayed in the visible world, and all those capacities that we have for discerning them; that all those natural connections that we have with the other parts  
of



of the universe, are to be regarded only as so many incitements and motives to quicken us to prepare for immortality!

If we are not immortal, we have no interest in these vast displays of wisdom and goodness which we now contemplate; and if we are made capable of perceiving the wonders of the universe, it is a capacity of no essential service to us. Take whatever side you please, it is impossible for us to give a rational account of the present system of things, but upon the supposition that man is immortal. All seems then beautiful and consistent. All that he sees, all that he feels, all that he enjoys, and even all that he suffers, calls out for immortality. If it be true that God has really formed us for immortality, should we not wish, and should we not expect from his wisdom and goodness, that he would employ a variety of means to make our wishes constantly tend towards futurity; that he would not only make the continuance of our existence the passionate desire of our nature, but that he would give us such a display of his perfections,

fections, such proofs of his love, his wisdom and goodness, as would effectually reconcile us to his appointments, and make it our most earnest prayer to live for ever with him? We should never, certainly, expect, that he would hang the heavens with a forbidding aspect, that all around should shew nothing but confusion, misery, and darkness; that the voice of joy and of gladness never should be heard, and the face of happiness never seen.

Such appearances as these would incline us to value immortality at a small price, and to wish rather that the grave might consume us, than that we should survive to be miserable. In the situation in which we are placed here, all around is grand and majestic; all displays the most perfect power and goodness. We are inclosed in the heavens, and surrounded with a multitude of worlds; all to tell us, that we are a part of the great family above, and connected with them; and to call forth our most earnest desires to be united with God through eternity. How perfectly do the  
book

book of nature and the book of grace agree in this respect! Revelation is a key to open to us the knowledge of God's works, and helps us to discover their beauties and read their language.

But further: Is it not an absurdity almost to conceive, that God should fit up such an habitation for such a poor miserable and uncertain creature as mortal man? And how shall we account for all those lessons, that are read to us in the book of nature, if we have not an interest beyond the grave? Hear what the psalmist says of man. *Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.* This description might be carried to the greatest extent. He has created the sun to circulate round this earth, to administer to us light, heat, and life: and  
when



when this sun retires, he has fitted up for us another prospect equally glorious and majestic, the moon and stars moving in silent majesty, and speaking, as they roll, the power, the wisdom, and goodness of their Creator. In the seasons, also, he has studied our instruction and our pleasure. The summer and winter, the spring and autumn, give to us not only a variety of instruction, but, by their agreeable changes, administer to our entertainment and delight. I can see no bounds to this contemplation of God's works.

But what do they all mean? They fill us only with hopes that cannot be gratified; they feed us with desires that shall never be enjoyed, if we are not to survive the grave. And though there may be the greatest marks of wisdom and power in the works themselves, yet we can see no goodness in making us capable of perceiving all these, if we be still mortal.

But take the other supposition: if we are formed for immortality, there appears the most exact propriety; all is meant to lead

us upward unto God; all to elevate the human mind; all to exalt and instruct man. Upon the supposition that we are immortal creatures, the whole instruction is well directed. We find an interest, a clear interest in all these works; and with joy and rapture may we say, These are the works of my Father and my God!

What immense difference must there be between the contemplation of the infidel and the christian! between the man that believes that he is animated with an immortal spirit, and the other, who argues, and would persuade himself, that his whole existence is limited to this earth! The infidel beholds nature with an unpleasing aspect. He feels no interest either in the works of nature, or in nature's God; or, if at any time, in spite of his principles, a sentiment of admiration or joy bursts forth, his joy and admiration are soon checked by the thoughts of mortality: the thoughts of everlasting death fill all with horror. He can find, upon his own principles, no more pleasure in beholding the glories of the universe,

verse, than a dying prince in the splendor and ornaments of that palace, which he is just going to leave for ever. But the dying christian derives comfort and hope from every work of God. He reasons thus:—"He that made this universe, and "made me capable of observing its wisdom and its beauties, is able to support "my soul amidst the decays of my present "fabric; and *though my heart and my flesh fail, God will be the strength of my heart "and my portion for evermore.*" On the strength of these principles, he lies down in death to put off the clog and burthen of mortality, that he may be fitted to be transported to some other region of bliss in the universe of God; that he may rise nearer to the center of wisdom and of love; and be for ever united with the blessed company of pure and happy spirits. All the glories and grandeur of the visible creation are so many invitations and warnings for him to prepare for this triumphant change.



## C H A P. X.

*The Nature and Properties of the thinking  
Power within us.*

**B**UT besides the evidences and intimations of a future state, arising from the situation of man and his distinguishing faculties, we meet with other strong intimations from the attentive consideration of that being or power within us, which we call the soul. Is there not great reason to believe, that this thinking, this reasoning power, is a substance distinct from the body, and has powers and enjoyments peculiar to itself? It is that power which thinks and reflects, that sits as judge of our actions, approves or condemns them according to their merit or demerit; it is that being which roams throughout the immensity of creation, and contemplates the works of its great author, unconfined

unconfined by place or unlimited by time. Is this a substance then distinct from the body? Or is it only the modification of organized matter, to which the Almighty has given the capacity of thought, reflection and understanding, and approving or disapproving of our different actions?

At the threshold of this enquiry, there stands a difficulty, and which has had its weight with a great number of inquisitive men. It is said that of this substance we cannot form any distinct idea: we know not how it is connected with the body: we cannot tell what is its nature, whether it be a material or immaterial substance: we can form no conception of its existence or actions, independent of the body. But these difficulties are not unfurmountable. We are every day forced to admit the existence of things which we cannot comprehend nor explain. We, for instance, see not the power, which governs this universe, which wheels round these mighty orbs, which supports and regulates the whole frame of nature, and prevents the whole from falling into its

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original

original disorder and confusion. Yet how absurd would that man appear, who should deny the existence of such a power, merely because he, with his weak sight and feeble capacity, is not able to take in and comprehend this great and governing cause! The cause we cannot see, but the fact is every day the subject of our observation. We cannot form an idea of the soul, nor of any immaterial substance, nor how invisible beings can act upon matter; and yet we are obliged to acknowledge that there are beings, invisible to us, and which fall not under the cognizance of any of our senses. There is however, at least, one invisible being always with us, whose presence we cannot discern, and whose power, nature, and actions we cannot fathom. We neither see, nor can see, the creator and governor of the universe; we know not his nature; we cannot ascertain his substance; yet we must confess his presence, for we see that in all his works. The human soul then may be of a substance similar to the Deity, and may govern this body in a manner somewhat similar, but infinitely less



less perfect, as that invisible power governs the universe. And by some of the same arguments, that we deny the existence of the human soul, may we exclude the Deity from the direction and government of the world. Some of the ancient philosophers have defined him to be the soul of the universe, in allusion, no doubt, to that invisible agent, which actuates and influences the human frame. It is of no consequence, what name we give to this substance: this may be our ignorance: but the existence of the Supreme Being leads us to acknowledge the existence of invisible agents, powerful and active; but their number, their different orders and degrees, and their limitations, we dare not presume to guess: but these beings may be intimately connected with us, though their nature and operations we cannot scan.

To come still nearer to ourselves: we are compelled to acknowledge innumerable wonderful properties in the things which surround us, and of which we can give no manner of satisfactory account. Men are every day making great discoveries in the

works of nature, and by experiments, calling forth to our perceptions many things, that our fathers were ignorant of, and of whose existence they could form no conceptions. Could it ever have been believed by them, that it was possible to call forth from inanimate matter, a most active and penetrating agent, capable of producing most powerful and astonishing effects? Such are the astonishing powers of electricity. The knowledge of this active power is still in its infancy; and it is impossible to tell to what extent the discovery may be carried. We find it however pervading all the known parts of matter, earth, water, fire and air. After this, then, will men refuse to believe in the existence of invisible and powerful agents, merely because we are not able to account for them, or fully to comprehend the nature and manner of their operations? This infidelity cannot be the child of reason or philosophy, but must be the offspring of obstinacy or of pride.

Our ignorance then of the nature of the soul, and the manner of its operations, ought

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to be no objection to its existence, because this ignorance equally affects the existence of many of the works and appearances of nature, of all invisible beings, and even of God himself. The wonderful powers and faculties of man lead to the probability, that there must reside within him something far different from, and much superior to matter.

In the *first* place, this invisible being is certainly the governor and director of the whole frame. It is the thinking power, that gives life and action to the different members, and puts a stop to these actions. The feet walk, and the hands work according to its pleasure. These members appear in no higher rank or authority, than the instruments only of that high power, which holds the supreme command. Sometimes, to be sure, the body is acted upon by external force, so powerful and irresistible as to counteract and controul the will and direction of the superior agent; but this power is still maintained by the opposition and reluctance ever testified by the mind to all such violence.



This power also is of a nature superior to, and very different from the various appetites, and opposes frequently their desires. The appetites prompt to the various acts, which are necessary for the support of the individual and the species; but the superior director often resists their inclinations and regulates their desires. In a well-regulated constitution this is always the case; although at the same time, it must be granted, that there are too many cases, where the appetite rules, and the soul loses its authority and command. But this principle is not only superior to the appetites, but also to the different affections, and in the same manner regulates them. Pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow excite in us various and different sensations; but all these are in danger of being carried to excess without the interference of that higher principle, which preserves the order and harmony of the whole.

The soul shares in all the pleasures and pains of the different parts of the body, and appears equally concerned in all; but it  
shares

shares not so much as a principal, but as a sympathising friend. In the first transports of joy, or in the first agonies of grief, the presiding principle appears for a while to be borne down and overpowered; but when the confusion begins to subside and order to return, then again this principle interposes and claims the proper ascendancy. This soothes the anguish of grief, and this moderates the excess of joy: this administers comfort under afflictions, and produces moderation and temper in prosperity. In all these interpositions and regulations, the soul appears the governor, and supporting an interest different from the various appetites, passions, and affections.

A *second* proof of the thinking substance being independant, in some measure, of the body is its perpetual activity, its constant and increasing exercise. It has been laid down as a principle by some, that the soul always thinks. This appears to be most probable. During our waking hours we are conscious of this truth; there is then no interruption to our thoughts: the mind is

always employed. But the material question is, Does the soul continue to think during the sound rest of the body? This is a question that has been much agitated; the probability is certainly much in its favour. We all know from the phenomenon of dreams, that the soul is busy, even in the hours when the body is at rest. We know further, that we often do dream, when afterwards we cannot recollect a single circumstance; when we cannot so much as know that we have been so occupied. Some little incident during the day, often brings to our recollection the dreams of the night, and thus not only informs us that we have been dreaming, but recalls at the same time the subject.

This is a presumptive proof that we are often so employed, when we are not sensible; and affords a further presumption, that we are always so employed, though we cannot bring the subject to our recollection. The soul then, if this be the case, stands in no need of the ordinary refreshments and recruits that the body requires. The renewal



newal of its powers depends not on food, or sleep, or any of the gross supports, that are necessary for this earthly frame.

In further proof of the perpetual activity of the soul, we have well-attested facts of people's walking, acting, and performing many acts of rationality with the greatest care and uncommon attention; and all the while they are utterly ignorant of such things. They recollect not a single circumstance; they know nothing of such operations, but from the information of others; a certain evidence that the soul acts whilst we are not conscious of its actions. Hence then our not being sensible of the perpetual operations of the soul, is no well-founded objection to its perpetual thinking; whilst there are so many facts to convince us, that it very often acts whilst we are utter strangers to all its operations.

There is one thing that has been opposed to this conclusion. "To think," say the opposers of this doctrine, "and not to recollect our thoughts, is a very useless thinking indeed." But the usefulness of our thoughts  
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is no criterion of the thinking power. Many of our waking thoughts are worse than useless: they are criminal: and how absurd to reason, that because our thoughts have been wickedly employed, therefore we have not been thinking! Our sleeping thoughts may often be much more innocent, and not less useful, than our waking thoughts. If this principle then be admitted, that the soul perpetually thinks, it will go a great way to prove, not only that the soul is a substance different from the body, but even independant of the body, and capable likewise of a separate existence.

In further confirmation of this point, we find the soul often employed in actions, where it can derive no assistance from the body. The soul can run back, and in a moment, to ages long since past, and contemplate, whenever it pleases, a variety of transactions, that have long since happened in the world. It can sit as judge of characters, that appeared thousands of years ago on this stage of life; and view some with pleasure and ineffable delight, and at the  
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same time look on others with indignation and contempt. It derives entertainment and pleasure, peculiar to itself, from such contemplations. It can even look forward into futurity, and, from what has happened, guess with a moral certainty at what is yet to come. It can take its range to the most distant parts, not only of the earth, but also of the heavens; and, from the treasure of knowledge laid up in the storehouse of memory, please itself in regions far remote from its present habitation and home.

The soul can travel through many of the works of its Creator, and contemplate their order, their beauty and magnificence, and rise from this contemplation to him who formed and still presides at the head of the whole. In fact, you can set no bounds to its operations, and no limits to its excursions. The whole inferior creation are utter strangers to these exercises. These are reserved solely for man. Can this then be nothing but organized matter? Humbling philosophy, that thus attempts to level man with the brute! that thus dishonours



nours human nature, and annihilates all the glorious distinctions, that raise us above the beasts that perish.

But the soul also has pleasures peculiar to itself. It possesses exclusively the pleasures of imagination and of taste, of harmony and of moral beauty, the pleasures arising from knowledge and the pleasures and sublime hopes that flow from religion. There is nothing that so much proves the different natures of the soul and the body, as their different pleasures. The pleasures of the body are such as arise from the gratification of the sensual appetites, many of which the soul does not partake of, but at the very moment condemns. They have their different pursuits and inclinations, as much as if they had separate existences. The pleasures of the body are momentary; the pleasures of the soul are more lasting and permanent.

Besides their separate and distinct pleasures, they have also diseases peculiar to themselves. Many things injure the body, that no farther affect the soul, but as it sympathises with  
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its friend and companion. And many of those diseases, which put a period to our earthly existence, seem in no respect to weaken the powers of the mind. The soul continues healthy and vigorous to the last, and in possession of all its faculties, reason and understanding, love, fear, hope and joy.

All the various changes, that the body passes through, make no change in the thinking principle. The old substance is daily wasting by perspiration, and new substance coming in by daily food: diseases reduce the body sometimes to a perfect skeleton, and the restitution of health brings on an increase of substance: from infancy to mature age, it is perpetually on the increase, and continually fluctuating and changing: and from maturity the body is constantly on the decline, and in all respects different from what it was at some other periods of its existence: the features change; but it is the same soul actuated by the same consciousness, in possession of the same powers and faculties

faculties, that regulates and directs this body through all the fluctuations and changes of man's mortal existence. Limbs are cut off; wounds and scars may affect and disfigure different parts of the body: sometimes there is much waste and consumption in the internal parts; but all these in no respect impair the faculties of the soul.

Where the principal residence of this immortal and thinking part is situated, is one of those secrets which God has reserved for himself; but wherever it be, it is so shielded and protected, that it escapes the injuries and accidents which prove fatal to the mortal part. Some diseases, it must be acknowledged, greatly disturb the operations of the mind. Memory perishes, reason is dethroned, and all the noble powers and glory of man fade away. Sometimes this is produced gradually; at other times brought on instantaneously; and by this change, those, who were once the greatest ornaments of our nature have been reduced to the state of childhood and of idiotism, and by their degradation



degradation present a humbling monument of the weakness and uncertainty of man.

But still such mortifying lessons may in no respect interfere with this general principle; or weaken our belief in the natural immortality of the soul, or its capacity of a separate existence. During the union between the body and the soul they must be mutually affected. There must be also some fixed laws, by which this union is preserved and regulated; and there may often happen diseases, which must disturb this connection.

The soul acts through the organs of the body, and when any of these principal organs are affected, the intercourse must be greatly deranged and interrupted; and this may be carried on so far, till the general law of union be totally dissolved and a complete separation take place. Upon the supposition, that they are two distinct substances, we must allow, that the law of their union may be totally dissolved; and must we not also grant, that this law also may be greatly

greatly disturbed by some violent affection in those organs, through which the intellectual part principally acts? The destruction of the body may in no respect injure the soul. We have many instances of such unions or combinations, where the destruction of the one substance does no way affect the other. We cannot suppose that by the dissolution of those substances, in which the subtle and active principle of electricity resides, you destroy this powerful principle: it may escape all your art and power: and in like manner the dissolution of these mortal bodies may perhaps in no respect injure the pure and immortal mind. We know that the disease which consumes this body does frequently produce not the smallest change in the thinking substance. On the approach of death, the mind frequently exercises the highest acts of rationality: the memory and recollection continue most perfect, the understanding, unclouded, the imagination, most vigorous and lively: and at the very last moment, the whole powers of the soul displaying an uncommon strength and vigour,  
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rising above their ordinary exertions to tell to man, that it already feels, in some measure, itself disengaged from this clog of mortality, and triumphing in immortal life and health. It is not possible, I know, to reduce our knowledge of the soul to any degree of certainty in this imperfect state; yet still such observations go to prove that the life of man is very different from mere animal life; that he is much superior in all respects to the brute creation, and that there are the strongest indications that he was formed for eternity.



## C H A P. XI.

*The moral perfections of God; and his moral government here incomplete.*

**T**HE intimations and evidences, that I have already considered in behalf of a future state, are founded upon a review of the human powers and faculties; and arise intirely from man considered in himself, or from the consideration of this magnificent world, in which he is placed as the principal inhabitant. But there is another evidence of considerable force to come in aid of the general argument, and which is derived from the perfections of the Supreme Being as the moral governor of the universe. We can never suppose, that he has brought such a world of rational creatures into existence, merely for the display of his power, without any regard to their happiness:

ness: and that he has imprinted in their minds the clearest distinction of right and wrong, of moral good and evil; that he has given unto them a principle of conscience, and written within them a clear law, whilst he himself pays no regard to that law, in all his dealings with his creatures. He that planted the ear, must he not hear; he that planted the eye, must he not see; and he who has given to such creatures the clearest sentiments of justice, must not he himself be strictly and unalterably just? He has given us every reason to believe that righteousness is our duty and his delight; and that wickedness is strictly forbidden to us, and the object of his disapprobation; that a course of virtue will produce the most perfect happiness, and that a vicious life must end in misery. And yet in the government of this world we find that virtue, in numberless instances, is not rewarded, nor yet vice remarkably punished, and that the present life is by no means a full display of the perfect moral government of God.

We have sufficient intimations from a number of circumstances, which is the side that Heaven declares for, and the cause that God approves. The voice of conscience, the nature and tendency of good and bad actions, prove to us; that the righteous are his delight and the wicked the objects of his disapprobation and displeasure. But then this government is not carried to the fullest degree of perfection. The wicked do not always meet with a proper punishment, nor the righteous with a full reward. With regard to worldly prosperity, health, strength, riches, and a thousand other things; all things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. The sun shines as fair, and the rain descends as plentifully in the fields of the bad man as of the good. The wicked are often the most successful and the most powerful on the earth. In death also we do not see any extraordinary distinction. For if the righteous possess more peace of mind, more inward tranquillity and composure; the wicked, in the hardness



ness of their heart, hold out against the stings of conscience and the forebodings of a future judgment. They are often enabled on the strength of superstition, by the aid of some of the forms and ceremonies of false religion, by confirmed habits of wickedness, and strong principles of infidelity, to maintain a tolerable composure, and to leave this stage without any extraordinary feelings of horror, or any distinguishing mark of the just judgment of God.

In the present mixed state of things, it is impossible for the moral government of God to be fully displayed. Mankind are so interwoven and connected together, the good and the bad, the righteous and the wicked, that the guilty cannot be punished without involving a number of innocents. The punishment of a wicked father would greatly affect his innocent and his helpless offspring: servants may be involved in the punishment of their masters, and subjects in that of their princes. There is no man, that stands so solitary and detached, that he could either suffer or be rewarded alone. Our interests

are so blended, and mankind are so closely interwoven, that no single offender could be brought to condign punishment, without that punishment extending to several others.

The present connection then must be totally broken and dissolved, before the compleat moral government of God can be fully displayed. May we not look forward then with confidence to a future world, where the wheat and tares shall be separated; and where the justice and equity of the divine administration will be revealed before the whole world and the ways of God justified to men: when all the irregularities of the present state shall be corrected, and all the rational world satisfied, that infinite wisdom, justice and goodness preside in the universe? Under the present government, good men are exposed to a variety of sufferings, some for their trial, some for their correction and improvement; some perhaps, that they may have an opportunity of displaying the strength of religion and the firmness of their faith. Sometimes they are called to suffer much for mankind; sometimes for virtue

and the testimony of a good conscience; sometimes for their connections and friends; but all these would be unnecessary and even improper and cruel, without a regard to futurity.

This state then is no more but the beginning of an hereafter, a state preparatory to that perfect world, where light and truth and virtue shall shine unclouded for ever and ever.

We never can believe, that an infinitely good God would call men into existence, merely to render them miserable; or that their sufferings should greatly overbalance their enjoyments; and these sufferings not brought upon them by their own behaviour, but a miserable entail upon them, by their situation or constitution. And yet how shall we account for the many miseries, to which the race of men, and even some of the best of men are unavoidably exposed? How many cruel tyrants and merciless conquerors have diverted themselves with the pangs and miseries of their fellow creatures; and have involved in one common destruction



the innocent and the guilty, and butchered, in cold blood, helpless women and innocent children ! What vast numbers of virtuous men have been condemned to perpetual slavery, or shut up in dark dungeons to waste a miserable existence ! The history of mankind is nothing else but a dreadful relation of human miseries, wars, bloodshed, assassinations, conspiracies, cities pillaged and burnt, and their miserable inhabitants doomed to cruel tortures or slavery : and all to gratify the pride, the ambition, the avarice or revenge of some of the most worthless and abandoned of the human race. What a scene of horror, confusion and injustice does this earth present, if there be not another world !

Again, many bring into the world with them weak constitutions, incurable diseases, and such bodily infirmities and disorders, as have rendered their whole lives a scene of trouble. The allotment of the great bulk of mankind is invincible poverty and affliction. Many become heirs to a miserable inheritance, being condemned by their birth to the infamy brought on by the disgraceful lives of their  
their

their parents ; against which they are called to maintain an unavailing struggle throughout life. But this is not the worst view of the picture ; how many thousands have been doomed to long sufferings, and at last to death for their inflexible adherence to virtue and to truth ? Good men have been the constant objects of persecution to the tyrants of this world.

Many have passed through a long course of suffering, some for their patriotism, some for their friends, and some for their religion. Driven from their native country, and from their fortunes and families, they have dragged out a miserable existence, under the pressure of poverty and in a foreign clime : whilst others are condemned to galleys, to dungeons, or to the darkness and dampness of mines ; or wanderers in the deserts have been compelled to seek a precarious subsistence amidst the ferocious beasts of prey.

Both ancient and modern history furnish us with too many instances of tyranny exercised

cised with unrelenting vengeance against the best of men. Many of the Roman emperors were monsters in human form. The dark suspicious temper of Tiberius decreed to inevitable destruction the most virtuous of the Roman citizens. The history of the church presents us with an illustrious band of martyrs suffering for the testimony of a good conscience and for their firm adherence to the truth. The history of the horrid inquisition is a history of racks and torments wantonly and unjustly exercised, under the impious pretence of the glory of God and the honour of religion. What then shall we say to all these, if there be no future state, where injured virtue and innocence may meet with a recompence for all the cruelty and injustice, that they have suffered here; and where the honour of the divine administration shall be fully vindicated, and the vigilance and justice of Providence demonstrated? Without the belief of a future state, how can we ever sincerely worship or love our Creator? how can



can we praise him? how can we celebrate his goodness, and address him as our father and our friend?

If there be not another world, goodness here should produce a full and adequate reward; and, under the government of a just God, guilt meet with its proper punishment. God cannot be an unconcerned spectator, or regard with an equal eye the villain and the honest, the dissipated and the sober, the murderer and the benevolent, the tyrant and the friend of man. Will there be no distinction between a Nero and an Antoninus, between a Caligula and a Socrates, between a bloody duke of Alva and the meek and innocent disciples of Christ? God has written a fair law in our hearts and there announced his sovereign pleasure, and yet in the government of the world, will he pay no respect to this law? will he cease to follow up with proper sanctions this clear declaration, that he has universally given? This present world can never be the perfection of moral government.

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In the history of mankind we meet with some exemplary instances of punishments and rewards. The tyrant has sometimes expiated his crimes by a notorious punishment. Tortured long by the stings of agony and remorse, he has closed the scene by some horrid death. Nero, the disgrace of human nature, who had cruelly put to death many of the most illustrious Romans, set fire to Rome, exercised the most barbarous and wanton cruelties against the disciples of Christ, and murdered his own mother, was pursued by the hand of Providence in the most visible and exemplary manner, and is hung up as an illustrious monument of the justice of its decrees. Reduced to the most extreme distress, universally hated, despised and deserted, in the dead of night, and attended with a few domestics, he went to several houses of his friends, but every where the doors were shut against him. Flying from the city, meanly apparelled and worse mounted, he was retiring under darkness and disguise to a country house as his last shelter : on the road he was terrified

by dreadful flashes of lightning and a violent earthquake, as if the ghosts, says his historian, of the many persons he had murdered were rising up against the merciless tyrant. He passed a night and a day in dark concealment and in such agonies as can hardly be expressed. Often did he attempt to anticipate his death with a dagger, but after trying its point with a trembling hand, his courage forsook him. Such was his cowardice as to intreat, with many tears, some of his attendants to animate him, by their example, to die with intrepidity. But Nero had no friend. One of his freedmen at last, with great reluctance, assisted him in striking the dagger to his throat.

Thus fell this tyrant overpowered with the horror of the murders he had committed, and tormented, in his last moments, by the stings of an accusing conscience; and, by his death, has left a memorable warning to the world, that God is no unconcerned spectator of the things that pass on this earth; and that the crimes, that are not expiated in this world, await the awful justice of God, in that world which will never end.

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For the same history, that records this and other instances of the justice of Providence, has furnished us also with many examples of tyrants and wicked men, leaving this stage in triumph and without any manifest declarations of the divine displeasure; and at the same time we find in every history many instances of good men retiring from this turbulent scene without receiving any visible token of the approbation of Providence. In the pagan world, some of their most virtuous men met with the severest persecutions, and infamous public deaths, as the reward of their integrity. Socrates was condemned, by enlightened Athens, for attempting to lead their youth to virtue and to the knowledge of the one only living and true God. Cicero was first banished by his ungrateful country, actuated by the influence of intriguing villains; and afterwards put to death by unrelenting tyrants, because he would not countenance them in enslaving his country. Seneca, with other illustrious men, were condemned by Nero for opposing his vicious inclinations, and for all their good counsels

counsels and attempts to lead him to virtue. Inflexible integrity and probity have brought destruction upon many eminent and virtuous men. The disciples of our Lord were hated of all men for his sake. They were accounted the offscouring of the earth, and were often exposed to the most cruel persecutions and ignominious deaths for their adherence to the truth, and for their unwearied labours in the best interests of mankind. Can we suppose then that such things pass unnoticed by infinite wisdom and goodness? Does God in the government of the world abandon those principles which he has so deeply implanted in the human heart? Will there be no recompence for virtuous men in another life? If this then be the case, those that have suffered most in the cause of goodness, may truly say that of all men they are the most miserable; and that the faithful servants of God, of all others, have been the most neglected. A Roman historian, in taking a survey of the world about the time of Nero's death, and the great distress brought upon

upon good men, breaks out into this impious reflection: "In truth," says he, "it is now plainly proved, by the many terrible calamities, that have befallen the Roman people, that the Gods exercise their care over us, not for our security but for their own vengeance."

Indeed without a reference to a future state, the whole moral world is a scene of imbecility, of confusion and injustice; but the admission of this principle solves and accounts for all. In the future world, all these irregularities will be rectified; vice will be punished, and virtue will be fully triumphant and completely rewarded. The present world exhibits the moral government of God in an imperfect and partial manner. We only see the parts of a scene begun here, but which is to be completed hereafter. Virtue in this life never meets with its full reward, nor produces its full effects. Its constant tendency is towards happiness; but, in the present world, these effects are constantly checked, and the happiness of good men interrupted. The future



ture world, taken in connection with the present, will open to us a magnificent display of the wisdom, justice and goodness of the great Governor of the universe. Then good men will be fully satisfied, *that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*; and the wicked will find to their everlasting confusion, that the course they have chosen ends in shame and in everlasting contempt.

## C H A P. XII.

*The constitution of the world, such as we must expect, on the supposition of another life.*

**I**T may be urged as an additional evidence of a future state, that the constitution of this world is exactly such as might be expected, if it were to be followed by another. It should be a state dark and imperfect: our insight into the eternal world should be confused and indistinct, otherwise, we should be incapable of performing aright our duties in the present state: it should be a life also of the greatest uneasiness and dissatisfaction, otherwise we should never wish for and never desire a removal: it should not be a life where the human heart should meet with full gratification or partake of compleat happiness, else we should be deprived of the noblest

noblest motives to ambition; we should never be reaching upwards for any higher attainments or any more desirable happiness. Besides, it must naturally be expected not to be a state of perfect moral government, if it be only a part of some great plan beginning here and constantly carrying forwards, and to be completed in the eternal world.

We must expect here only such a view, as to convince us of the presence and interposition of God, to establish in us a firm trust and reliance in his providence, justice and goodness. The present mixed state cannot allow a perfect government. We must expect also to see virtue here in great shades and mixed with much weakness, and even never producing its full effects, but only sufficient to convince us, that this ought to be our choice, and in every state, to this cause to maintain a steady adherence. In this world also we should have a taste of the bounty and goodness of the great father of all, and such a lively view of his works, as to raise our minds to him, and to ani-



mate us to seek after a more complete knowledge in that more perfect world, which is to succeed. Had we more knowledge, more happiness, more virtue, and a more perfect enjoyment of infinite goodness; then we should find a sufficient and satisfactory account of our present state and faculties, and no well-grounded expectation of any thing better. There would remain no longing after immortality, no forebodings or apprehensions of conscience, and no dread or alarm about death. Content with the portion assigned us here, at our appointed time, and after answering the end of our existence, we should, without fear or trembling, resign our lives to the disposal of him, from whom we received all things.

PART

## P A R T II.

## Evidences from REVELATION.

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C H A P. I.

*The instantaneous and perfect manifestation of divine knowledge, on the appearance of Jesus Christ.*

SUCH then are the intimations and evidences arising from reason and nature in support of our belief of a future state. But christianity has strengthened all these hopes, for life and immortality have been enlightened by the gospel. The same evidence that establishes the truth of christianity in general, must establish, at the same time, our belief in a future state, for this is one of its principal articles. If the gospel be true, man must be immortal.

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But in managing the argument with unbelievers, and without going into the evidences for christianity in general, it appears to be the fairest and the most unexceptionable conduct, to take advantage of such facts and principles only as are generally admitted by fair and candid unbelievers themselves.

It will then, I flatter myself, be allowed by all, who are sufficiently acquainted with such subjects, that, at the appearance of Christ, a wonderful and extraordinary change was immediately produced in religious knowledge. An instantaneous stream of light poured in upon mankind, and extended its rays in all directions, east and west, north and south. A Supreme Being was proclaimed to the world, greatly unlike the gods of Greece and of Rome, a being of all possible perfections. The Jewish nation had been long favoured with the knowledge of the one, only, living and true God; but their ideas of him were very imperfect, in comparison of the knowledge derived from the gospel. They conceived of him

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as partial, attached to their particular nation, as awfully removed from mankind : and the nature of their service, as well as some parts of their history, give us an idea of him, as of a local deity, and the peculiar guardian and protector of their nation.

But the gospel represents him as a God of infinite goodness and love, the God and Father of all mankind, forming them for happiness, and conducting them by an infinite variety of means to everlasting bliss. *God so loved the world, that he gave to us his only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.* At the appearance of Jesus Christ, the world was fitted up by Providence for his reception ; and a number of chosen instruments were raised up to carry the light and truth of the gospel to all mankind. Some of the philosophers, long before this time, had attempted to teach the knowledge of God to their disciples. Such knowledge they were never able to attain to any degree of perfection. Their conceptions of God were blended with much absurdity and folly : and their efforts

to instruct the world were soon checked by the force of superstition, and by the blindness and prejudice of mankind. The effects of their labours never long outlived themselves. Yet these men had many advantages on their side. Some of them lived in an age of knowledge, particularly distinguished for its politeness, civilization and high attainments. But their religion, in spite of all their labours, was a disgrace to human reason, and strongly tinged with the most abominable superstition.

All at once, a poor despised and illiterate Galilean arises, teaches, in the clearest and most perfect manner, the existence, the perfections and providence of God, proclaims him the father of mankind, of infinite goodness and love, the friend and benefactor of the human race. He, at the same time, opens the door of immortality, assures us that we are the immortal offspring of God himself; points out to us the road to heaven; proclaims pardon and remission of sin upon the condition of faith, repentance and new obedience; teaches the doctrine of a future judgment

judgment and the resurrection of the dead, and that the eternal allotment of all mankind will be determined by their behaviour whilst in this world.

At the same time, and with the same simplicity and plainness, he taught every important duty; the summary of which was to love the Lord our God with all the powers of the understanding and heart; to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

These I think are facts, which every candid and honest unbeliever must allow. The question then presses upon us, How are we to account for this flood of light, rushing in all at once upon the world? The execution of this great work far surpassed the natural powers and experience of man. In less than three years this illustrious messenger threw more light upon the world, with respect to God, the nature of man, a future state, than all the united labours of men could do for some thousand years, during which they had kept possession of the world.

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There is no accounting for this upon common principles. God himself must have assisted and supported these instruments. Every thing was at once carried to the highest degree of perfection. *God said, Let there be light, and there was light:* A new spiritual world immediately sprung up. We are so accustomed to the knowledge and advantages derived from the gospel, that we do not feel this argument in its full force.

The works of creation, and the goodness of the Creator, are so familiar to us, that we overlook the principal agent, the great first cause: and in like manner our early acquaintance and familiarity with the truths of religion, causes us to overlook the presence of God in the astonishing revolution produced by the preaching of the gospel. But it seems to have required nothing less than a divine power to have removed the darkness and prejudices, that then covered the world, and to raise up such an instantaneous and strong light.

Now, for what worthy end were all these great discoveries made to the world? All  
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was unnecessary and superfluous, if man be not immortal. It is all empty parade and profusion, a solemn and cruel mockery of the human race, if the whole man is to be destroyed by death. Here is a combination of circumstances, contrived by the governor of the world to impose upon, to tantalize and to delude miserable man. There is planted in his heart the strongest desire for immortality: this is the universal belief and wish of all mankind: this wish is encouraged by every appearance and circumstance around him, his conscience, the nature of the thinking principle within, the magnificence of the habitation in which he is placed, the high rank he holds in this world: and lastly, all these are strengthened and confirmed by an illustrious messenger, speaking clearly on divine things, on God, on futurity, on religious and moral duties, on the general judgment and resurrection of the dead. We have, in short, every evidence that we could require in our present situation and faculties, to convince us that we are to live in another and more perfect world.

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If pride and vanity foster in us these lofty ideas; it is certainly a noble pride. If we are not allowed to trust to and act from such intimations and evidences, we must feel ourselves strangely bewildered: we must resolve all into enchantment, a conspiracy of malignant beings to sport with our weakness, and to amuse themselves with the dreams and phantoms of our wild and misguided imaginations. But the wisdom, justice and goodness of the supreme governor of the world forbid such thoughts. He must delight in the happiness of his creatures, and he has prepared immortal habitations for all his faithful servants, who, influenced by such intimations and clear promises, endeavour to do his will on this earth.



## C H A P. II.

*The general Character of Jesus Christ.*

**B**UT, in addition to the doctrines and duties of the gospel, the character of its illustrious author and his disciples come in further support of a future state. In the history of Christ we may take notice; First, of his general character, his sentiments, manners and method of teaching; Secondly, the virtues he taught and recommended by his example; Thirdly, that dignity, magnanimity and fortitude, with which he submitted to suffering, and the most ignominious death. Each of these strengthens our belief in another world, and all of them, when combined, will produce in the mind of every attentive observer the strongest conviction.

If we examine the character of Jesus Christ, we must allow it to be in every respect

spect perfect, and of a perfection very different from any conception that the world could form. In his duty towards God, you see the most rational piety, the most unaffected devotion, and the most unreserved submission to all the appointments of Providence. In his sufferings, no affectation of apathy, or of braving pain, but alive to every feeling, he utters his complaints with dignity, and then leaves all to the disposal of his heavenly Father. *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* In his duty towards men, he is a most perfect example. His benevolence was disinterested, and he went constantly about doing good. We see towards his friends the most perfect love and tender care. Such was his treatment of his disciples. And in confirmation of this, we may produce that affecting scene, which passed at the house of Lazarus. If we enquire into the motives of all his actions, it will be impossible, I think, for his enemies to fix upon him any selfish or interested view. The only thing that can be  
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suspected

suspected in such an undertaking must be the lust of power, the acquisition of wealth, ambition, the love of popularity: or else to suppose, that a person who so acts must be under the powerful influence of enthusiasm.

Now were we to examine the life of our Lord upon all these principles, his best friends need not dread the result. As some attention, however, will be paid to these afterwards, in the proper place, I shall at present pass over them, only observing, that there is no occasion for a very minute and tedious examination of the motives of his actions, as there seems to be but very little ground for suspicion; neither do I remember, that any of the more respectable infidels have ever attempted to fix upon him any unworthy imputation or charge.

But, before we proceed to consider the divisions into which we have thrown the character of Christ, it may be proper to notice, that we have only to claim in behalf of his history, as recorded by the evangelists, the same privileges that are claimed for every well-attested history; asking no more than to grant,



grant, that there was such a person, and (waving every consideration of his miraculous power, and the other particular evidences that he was the Messias) that he was in all other respects such, as he is described in the gospel; that his moral character, that his manners, discourses, devotion and sufferings, were nearly such as they are represented by his historians. If these be granted, we shall be able, I hope, to find in them alone strong intimations and evidences of a future state.

And the history of Jesus Christ has an advantage peculiar to itself. The character, taking it altogether, is such, that it is almost impossible to suppose, that it should have been forged. It is truly an original, borrowed from no other model, that was ever exhibited on earth, totally unlike any of the patriarchs, prophets or philosophers that ever lived among men. Impostors would have given us a character more popular, and more accommodated to the common notions and prejudices of the world. They would have ascribed to him, as a public character, some  
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of those dazzling virtues, that attract the most notice, inflexible justice, daring heroism, and an unconquerable love for his country.

Is it not a most unaccountable phenomenon, that they should have struck all at once into a new line of virtues, and, at the first essay, produced a character entirely new and highly finished? If we were to suppose them to be impostors, we must admit farther, that instead of being these illiterate and artless men, strangers to life and manners, they must have possessed uncommon abilities, a most perfect acquaintance with human nature, and the most consummate art to disguise all their designs. And yet no one has ever attempted to give them this character.

But not only is the character itself singular and totally new, but their conduct of the history is equally unprecedented. They never attempt, in a formal manner, to delineate a character, or to tell what their master really was, or what they thought of him, but give you a collection of detached facts, doc-

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trines, and morals, arranged in some sort of order; and these they leave with the world, from which to form their opinion of Jesus Christ. When they relate the most extraordinary works, they discover no surprise, they indulge in no reflection; they answer no objections: they attempt to remove no doubts; but tell the simple fact, and you may receive it or not as you please.

In this manner do they conduct every part of his history. They give you his discourses, his prayers, his sufferings, his crucifixion and resurrection, without any comment, any expression, from themselves, of gratitude, of wonder or of love. There is something uncommon and unaccountable in all this. The singular conduct of the history prepares us to expect something extraordinary in the character; a personage from another world to tabernacle among men, and whose life whilst here was much unlike every thing that the world had ever seen before.



## C H A P. III.

*Christ's Sentiments, Doctrines, Method of Teaching and Manners.*

LET us first then, in illustration of these observations, take a review of his sentiments, doctrines, and manners, as an evidence of a future state. To begin with his sentiments of the Supreme Being. Every thing that he says of God, gives us in a few words, the best conception of his character, his power, his spiritual nature, his infinite goodness, and a Providence exercised in the most perfect manner, and descending to our minutest concerns.

And the manner also, in which he says these things, is totally unlike the ordinary manner and instructions of men. He speaks without labour, with the most perfect ease;

and he conveys these important instructions almost without our suspecting his intention or design. He brings these sublime truths down to the comprehension and capacity of the weakest and most ignorant of men. So that, to use his own language, the least in the kingdom of God, or in the school of Christ, is wiser, in divine matters, than all the philosophers that ever appeared in the world. He speaks also always without hesitation, with the most perfect clearness, not only of God, but of every thing in the future and eternal world, as one to whom all these things were familiar, as one that was perfectly master of all that he says. His language is not the language of enthusiasm; it is not the language of passion, and yet it is always interesting and affecting; and he speaks as one that really felt. His is not the cold argument of a philosopher, but it is always convincing and reasonable, and directed in such a manner, that you feel, that it is the language both of the understanding and the heart.

There is in his doctrines nothing dark or  
obscure,

obscure, no darkness arising from ignorance or confused ideas, and no obscurity from affected ambiguity, and a design to conceal his real intentions. The doctrines, that he teaches, are all useful, the foundation of hope, comfort or duty. He carefully avoids entering upon dark and intricate subjects, which only bewilder and perplex the mind, and divert it from what is interesting and really useful. He refuses to gratify an idle curiosity, but employs all such opportunities to the purposes of religious and moral instructions.

He says nothing of the essence and manner of existence of spiritual beings, of the decrees of God, of fate, free-will and necessity; these impenetrable secrets, these foils to human reason, which serve only to expose the imbecility of the human mind, and the narrowness of its comprehension.

He says nothing upon subjects of philosophy, propounds no systems of nature, decides on none of these curious controversies on metaphysics, astronomy, or the laws of nature, or the political governments of



mankind. His wisdom appears equally conspicuous, in what he omits as well as in what he teaches. His whole doctrine was directed to enlighten the understanding and to improve the heart; to destroy sin and to introduce and support universal righteousness; to open the eyes of the mind, to bring men from darkness to light, and to conduct them in the path of virtue to immortal glory and happiness. All the different branches of his instructions keep this end perpetually in view; his reproofs, his exhortations, the comforts he administers, his parables, his prayers, and, in short, his whole life, was to advance human nature to all that useful knowledge, virtue and happiness, of which it is capable.

Where can you meet with such animated piety, such fervent devotion, and such complete resignation and trust? Read attentively his several prayers, particularly his intercessory prayer, his prayer in the garden, and that generous prayer, that he offered upon the cross for his enemies: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*: the

coldest heart, if only attentive, must ever feel, when they read or hear this devotion of our Lord. These prayers are always natural, very different from the language or efforts of enthusiasm. There you find images tortured, the imagination on the rack, and labouring to say glittering or affecting things. There is nothing like this in the devotion of Jesus Christ. When he speaks of his heavenly Father, you feel so much reverence, and so much affection, that there can remain no doubt, that he had the firmest persuasion of his presence and of his love; that he knew God, and that he accounted it his highest happiness to do his will.

When the wisest of men, even with all the advantages of his history and example, attempt to speak upon these subjects, you see darkness, perplexity, and much labour; whilst our Lord speaks with clearness, with certainty and the most perfect ease. Hence every reader of judgment and of taste, will find an infinite difference between the best paraphrase on our Lord's language, and the original itself. Commentators break down

the simple images of Jesus Christ into a thousand of their own fancies; and thus whilst they attempt to give you the sense, they destroy the spirit. It appears to me presumption, and an argument of a bad taste, to dare to paraphrase the words of Christ. It is the same as taking one of the most beautiful landscapes of nature, and presenting it to you in its several detached pieces, much magnified, to assist you in its examination; whilst in this manner, you lose the order, the symmetry and that inexpressible beauty, which results from a complete view of the whole.

There is something, which I always feel, but am not able to describe, when I read what our Saviour says about the invisible world and its inhabitants. God, and heaven, and angels, are subjects with which he seems perfectly familiar: there he appears to be at home: there you see his affections. He speaks of all such things, not only as things with which he was well acquainted, but as things which no one could dispute. Hence he never offers a direct proof of the existence



ence of these glorious objects, but you find the best evidence of them in his candour, in the openness of his manners, and in that familiarity and knowledge with which he speaks of all divine things. He not only enlightens every such subject, but he says upon it the very best things. Whoever forms an intimate acquaintance with Christ's character, will feel, almost without the possibility of mistake, that he came from God, that he knew God, and had the most intimate knowledge and certainty of another life. His instructions, his knowledge, bespeak him to be a citizen of another kingdom, yea of another world.

Take also into the account his manners, and we shall see a perfect model of what we may expect men to be in another life, when our nature and faculties shall be all refined. Though he was susceptible of hunger and of cold, of labour and fatigue, of pain, of a sense of insult, of grief and sorrow, and all the other innocent affections of human nature, yet he was devoid of every passion and attachment that mark a corrupted heart.

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He had no attachment to this world, or any of its possessions or pleasures. With respect to wealth and riches, and all the objects of ambition, power and fame, he was totally disinterested. He looked on this world and all its enjoyments with the greatest indifference, as one well acquainted and fully assured of much higher gratifications and more durable enjoyments.

He had certainly many opportunities to have raised himself to the head of the nation; and had he been possessed of ambition or the love of power, he had only to have offered himself as a leader to the people, and to have set at defiance all the power of his enemies. His great works, his beneficent actions, his eloquence and the charms of perfect goodness must have led and directed the multitude to whatever objects he pleased. He had only to have made a proper use of these to have raised himself to the highest station. But all such things he held in the most sovereign contempt.

Without the ostentation of rejecting the honours offered him by the multitude, and  
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by these arts to have increased his power and popularity, he slips silently aside from their admiration and proffered honours, and vanishes out of their sight. This was giving the strongest proof that he was not factious, that he was not a raiser of sedition; that the powers and honours of this world had no charms for him; that he was peaceable, humble, and meek, and that his kingdom was not of this world. He was destitute of every kind of possession, houses, lands or so much as a hole to recline his head: and he was equally a stranger to all the luxuries and dainties of this life. And yet with all this poverty, there was nothing morose, nothing gloomy, and no affected austerity in his life. He frequented the company and society of men, he was capable of the most exalted friendship: he was invited to the tables of distinguished persons, and sometimes accepted these invitations; and he joined in promoting cheerfulness at the marriage feast. Such compliances and condescensions seem meant to tell us, that he enjoined no unnecessary mortifications, that he forbid no innocent enjoyments,



enjoyments, and that he avoided every thing that had the appearance of singularity in his conduct.

But in general his fare was poor and precarious; he was often on the deep or in the desert, depending entirely on the bounty ministered to him by his friends, or the supplies of Providence, or perhaps what was furnished him sometimes by hard labour and industry.

And with regard to other earthly ties, though his heart was open to the most extensive benevolence, yet he avoided forming any kind of connection in this life; neither marrying nor given in marriage, without children or family, excepting the few disciples whom he adopted, and with whom he constantly lived. His mother, his brethren, his sisters he properly acknowledged; but wishing not to narrow his mind to these particular relations, he embraces as his family whosoever did the will of his Father in heaven. In this, how much does he resemble his heavenly Father, who limits not his goodness to any particular family or nation, but diffuses it every where, that all may partake

partake of his bounties and rejoice in his love! This extensive benevolence, and all these sentiments, unlike to any thing upon this earth, bespoke his origin from heaven, and point out to all that study his character, that there must certainly be a more perfect world, where human nature shall be exalted, and where love and benevolence reign in full perfection for ever and ever.

In his manners, as I have already observed, there was no appearance of austerity; neither was there any stoical pride: and, in his desires, no affectation of self-denial; no studied and forced restraint on his appetites: all was natural and easy: all suitable to the dignity and character of the son of God, when appearing among men.

Now what are we to conclude from this? That he was possessed of the most perfect knowledge and assurance of another world, and that he lived in all respects as one governed by these possessions and belief. In what manner might we conceive a superior being to live, supposing one to come among us in the same station and with the same views

views as Jesus Christ? I cannot imagine different, in any respect, from that in which our Lord lived on this earth. He lived above this world. And this manner of life proceeded not from pride, from moroseness of temper, from disappointment, or from aversion to society: for this very person entertained the greatest love and good-will to all mankind. This life proceeded not from weakness of intellect, or from enthusiasm, which often produces strange effects, and raises up extraordinary characters. On the contrary, he was endued with divine wisdom and knowledge; and in all he did and said you see the government of the soundest reason, the clearest knowledge, and a wisdom superior to any thing that ever appeared on this earth. *Never man spake as this man did.*

But other considerations will contribute greatly to strengthen this argument. One part of our Saviour's character supports and illustrates another. It is not one single detached excellence, standing like a solitary pillar; but every excellence, united in his person,



person, give strength, proportion and beauty to this glorious fabric. There were in him a simplicity of manners, an absolute freedom from every bad passion, most excellent wisdom; and to all these you may add the impossibility of fixing upon him any selfish or interested view. The simplicity of his manners may be learned from a variety of circumstances. His disciples were selected from the meanest of the people, and with these he lived in the most intimate familiarity, without taking upon himself any peculiar distinction. He shared in their labours, their toils, and their poor fare, foremost in the post of danger, and desirous of taking the whole suffering part upon himself: *If ye seek me, let these go their way.*

And yet, though he lived in this poor manner, he never countenances or recommends any particular mortification. He associates sometimes with the rich, and sat at their table: and in his dress we hear of nothing singular, except an accidental hint that his coat was without seam. But this is not noticed as any instance of austerity or even

even singularity. This coat might be a present from some of the pious women, who followed him and ministered to him, and is mentioned merely as a circumstance, which contributed to the fulfilment of a prophecy concerning him.

In his dress, it is most probable, that he complied with the innocent and modest fashions of the times. And this seems confirmed, because in his discourses or rebukes, we find no censure of the dress or fashions of this world, excepting, where he condemns the pride and self-righteousness of the Pharisees, when courting the applause and reverence of their followers, by the singularity of their dress, making broad their phylacteries and enlarging the borders of their garments. Now this is the more remarkable, as dress has ever been a fruitful subject of declamation for all pretended reformers; and as great stress and respect have in general been paid by the multitude to some singular plainness and austerity of this kind.

In his manners there was a peculiar sweetness, and he discovers none of that sourness  
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of temper, which arises from neglect or scorn, and disappointed ambition. In his discourses, we meet with no studied invective against riches, luxury or any other such topics, ever grateful to the envious, often popular, and always well received by those whose circumstances debar them from the attainment. He was possessed of uncommon gentleness; whilst he condemns the proud and self-righteous Pharisees for their imposition on the people and the pretended sanctity of their lives; like one who knew human nature well, he is ever disposed to make all gracious allowances for the frailties and imperfections of weak men; and gives every encouragement to a returning and penitent sinner.

But there are two things still wanting to compleat this part of his character. In the first place, amidst much good intention, and the best heart, there may be a want of wisdom and knowledge, which would debar us from drawing from his character an argument in favour of the eternal world. All men are liable to be mistaken, and the

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very best are sometimes the dupes of their own hearts. But the character of Jesus Christ is adorned with the most perfect wisdom. Without having recourse to those instances of his speaking to the thoughts of men, he gave every proof that he knew what was in man by the propriety and prudence of his whole conduct, by the manner in which he conducted himself both towards friends and towards enemies. The instantaneous perfection to which he carried all divine knowledge; the wisdom he discovered in confounding all his enemies, taking them often in their own craft; the perfect knowledge, which he discovered in every part of his instructions; the justice of all his decisions; and the spotless purity of his behaviour, throw a lustre on all his actions, and give weight and irresistible force to every doctrine he taught.

Then when you take into the account, that this unerring wisdom was solely directed to the constant support of truth and goodness and the best interests of men; all pointing towards a future state, and every part bearing

bearing, with the most exact harmony, towards this common center, what light and evidence do they give to the existence of his everlasting kingdom! Can we suppose, that one so wise, so perfect and good would sacrifice every thing in this world to a shadow? And that for the sake of raising and maintaining a delusion, he would embark on a life of poverty, contempt, and wretchedness; and to carry on all this, for a number of years, with steadfastness and uniformity, without the smallest deviation from this grand and important point? A life so pure and so regular, sacrifices so great and interesting, is the very best evidence in favour of his belief of a future world. They prove his sincerity; and then his superior wisdom was the best security you can desire that he himself was under no deception. *His kingdom*, he tells us, *was not of this world*; and of this he gave every evidence by the whole tenor of his life.

The general strain of his doctrines, though directed to the future world and to prepare men for those everlasting mansions, yet they

are so wisely regulated and balanced, that they are the very best plan man could adopt for his happiness in the present life. Piety, benevolence, justice and temperance, at the very time, that they are forming us for future and more perfect enjoyments, do immediately produce the highest, the purest, and the most durable happiness, that man can taste in this imperfect state. All the restraints that Christ lays on his disciples, and every point of self-denial that he recommends, are not exertions of his authority, nor tests of our obedience, but are equally necessary to our happiness both here and hereafter. Both as a teacher then and as an example, he is equally excellent.

Compare him in every respect with any of the other teachers, philosophers or reformers that ever appeared in the world: all are far behind. And this is a distinguishing criterion: other teachers were too learned, too deep and obscure in their doctrines, ever to be of much benefit to mankind. There was too much of system, too much of study and labour in their instructions,



structions, ever to be attended to, or understood. But Jesus Christ, with the most perfect wisdom, adapts his instructions and doctrines to the great bulk of mankind. He was the universal Saviour and teacher. All may read: all may understand, and all may profit by him; the busy as well as the idle; the ignorant as well as the learned: and he gives it as the mark of his divine mission, that *to the poor the gospel was preached*. He preached the words of eternal life; and he was the fittest guide to that happiness, that he promises to good men in the eternal world.

But there was a second thing, I observed, wanting to compleat this part of his character, and to strengthen the evidence to be derived from it, for a future state: and that is, that he could have no other object in view, than the salvation and everlasting happiness of men. What other account can justify his character, his doctrines, his manner of life, and that unwearied pains he took to instruct and redeem the human race? If this was not the design of Providence in

raising up and supporting such an illustrious messenger, his appearance, his life and doctrines, and the great change produced in the religious world, is one of the greatest mysteries that was ever seen on this earth. Try, if you can, to assign any other reasonable motive for his conduct, and any thing that can clear up the dispensations of Providence in raising up and supporting such a distinguished character. In his whole history, there is not the smallest symptom of his ever being actuated by an inordinate ambition: he never courted popularity; and he was under the government of no low and selfish passion. He had no political purposes to serve by his labours, for he was totally unconnected with every ruling power. An ambitious person would have caught hold of the pride and independent spirit of the Jewish nation, the disgrace of a foreign yoke, and the peculiar protection promised to them and formerly granted by God himself, to have raised himself to the first rank in their state, and to have disturbed the government.

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An impostor, or he that was under the government of some fordid and selfish passion, would have fallen in with the humours of the people, and if he durst not oppose the popular sect of the Pharisees, would have chimed in with their prejudices, and by art and flattery obtained the ascendancy in religion. But our Lord's conduct was in direct contradiction to this policy. He preached peace and obedience: he himself paid the tribute money: and he openly cut off every chance of rising in the government by his public declaration to his disciples, *that his kingdom was not of this world*. Far from courting the leading men among the people, he exposed their principles and hypocrisy, by the freedom of his censures; and by the uprightness of his conduct and his integrity he drew upon himself their keenest hatred and enmity. The means that he employed acquit him of ambition, interest or any other false motive or view in his conduct.

But there is no occasion for any very minute examination of this part of his cha-



rafter, because I do not know, that there ever has been any attempt, by his most implacable enemies, to lay such things to his charge. Fixing therefore our attention on this part of his character, his pure and important doctrines, his precepts and his excellent example, there seems to be good ground for asserting that he was that light that enlightened the world; that *he had the words of eternal life*; that *he was the brightness of the Father's glory*; that *he was God's beloved son*; and that after a life so pious and benevolent, so pure and temperate, spent in unwearied goodness, he is now gone into the highest heavens to prepare eternal mansions for all his faithful followers.

CHAP.

## C H A P. IV.

*The excellent virtues Christ taught, and recommended by his example.*

THE next argument for the future world, founded on the character of Jesus Christ, is the excellent virtues, which he taught to men, and illustrated by his own example. As his doctrines and manners give to us the clearest views of another world, so the excellent virtues he taught and exemplified, are intended to carry human nature to the highest degree of perfection, and to fit us for a purer society. He exhorts us to the great duties of resignation and submission, to a trust in God's providence; and he practised all these in the most exalted degree. His aim is to destroy every malignant principle, and to implant in the human

human breast the most compleat benevolence and love. He condemns covetousness, lust, pride, ambition, malice and hatred; and he enjoins, to his disciples, disinterested benevolence, temperance, humility, contentment, meekness, brotherly kindness and love.

There are some of his precepts difficult, but all must allow, that they are truly sublime. Self-denial, an unlimited forgiveness of offences, and love to enemies are difficult duties, but whenever they are met with genuine and pure, they are highly ornamental to our nature. There are many of the things which he enjoins, not absolutely necessary for us, either as inhabitants of this world or as members of society; but they are all necessary, all indispensable, if we belong to another and a more perfect life. His absolute indifference about all earthly concerns, makes an important part of his system of self-denial: and this indifference was not the effect of necessity, but an absolute matter of choice. He certainly had many indulgences within his reach,

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and more in his power, but he had no desire no relish for any of the things of this life.

But our Saviour was different from all other teachers in another remarkable respect. He practised in the most perfect manner every thing that he taught to men. Men at ease, and in their closets may readily dictate numberless difficult duties, but like the teachers of the Jews not touch them with their least finger. Seneca, rioting in luxury and in wealth, may declaim eloquently on the praises and advantages of poverty, and calmly teach us how it ought to be borne. But Jesus Christ exceeded in his practice all the difficult duties he recommended. Who was ever so meek and humble? who was ever so patient and resigned? who ever forgave injuries with more chearfulness, or pardoned offences so often? And who ever loved enemies, like the ever-blessed Jesus?

His practice, in these cases, was more beautiful and more exalted, than even his precepts could reach.

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Though *he was despised and rejected of men*, yet he never in any instance complains of the hardship and injustice of his condition : he utters no invective or so much as a murmur against his inveterate enemies. *When reviled, he reviled not again, but returned blessing for cursing*, and bore patiently the *contradiction of sinners*. A character then directed by these principles could expect no compleat happiness in this world. To what purpose then all his sacrifices, if he had not had the clearest view of another and a more perfect life ? There must have been some object corresponding to this greatness and excellence, that could so powerfully influence such wisdom, and call forth to exercise such exalted goodness ; some certain reward in another world, for all this life of sorrow, of self-denial and of suffering. To carry these virtues to that excess must have been madness in the extreme, unless he had been animated by these powerful hopes.

But not only these hard and painful sacrifices, but his exalted virtues lead us to immortality. It must have been these and  
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these alone, the certain views of heaven and its glories, that animated and supported his sublime and fervent piety, that gave such activity and diligence to his extraordinary goodness; that strengthened him in all his trials, and maintained in him a calm and stedfast dignity, amidst the rage and malice of his persecutors. The firmest mind, without some such support, must have sunk under the trials, he had to undergo, must have occasionally betrayed peevishness, and sought some relief in the indulgences of life. Should we ascribe his firmness to a morose, an obstinate and a sullen temper? But where did you ever find united such opposites as you must then allow in the character of Christ? obstinacy with the greatest condescension and affability! moroseness with an uncommon sweetness! and a sour and sullen temper with the most extraordinary benevolence and love! You may invent a thousand schemes to account for this uncommon character, and to give a solution for all his actions; but every scheme will involve some difficulty and absurdity;



furdity ; every scheme will prove unsatisfactory, but the scheme of his firm and certain belief of another life. And then every thing is natural and easy on this principle, and on this alone.

It is further to be observed, that he was under no necessity of embracing this system of mortification and self-denial ; for could he but have been persuaded to have deserted his cause ; his talents and virtues were such as to have raised him to the highest rank in the Jewish nation. To have delivered his country, to have taken the lead in their weak and distracted councils, would have been to him an indispensable duty, had not some superior and more important obligation been ever uppermost in his thoughts ; and this was no less than the deliverance and happiness of all mankind.

But he lived in that country as one that felt no interest, and took no concern in their transactions ; as one that cared not how their political affairs ended, provided he could only deliver them from the dominion of their prejudices and sins. Peace and  
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quiet were all that he fought for in earthly governments; and for the sake of these he readily paid the tribute money and every other exaction; and whilst he saw his country far sunk under the oppressions of a foreign yoke, he lived as a pilgrim and a stranger to all their concerns, and to all the concerns of this earth.

And this will appear the more extraordinary, when we consider that his temper was not indolent, nor his heart unfeeling, but possessed of the most active industry and tender affection, with the warmest love and regard for his country and for Jerusalem, he spent his whole life in their instruction, and in doing all possible good. But all this industry and affection were directed to their everlasting happiness: and in this he gave the most convincing evidence of his firm persuasion and belief of his everlasting kingdom.

It was not a stoical indifference, or cowardice arising from the sense of danger or the fear of death, that prevented him from taking an active part in the deliverance  
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of his country; for his life was full of labour, of difficulty and hazard: and when the time of his being offered up arrived, he met death with the most determined fortitude and resolution. In the cause of his heavenly Father, and in the exercise of disinterested goodness, he was ardent and indefatigable: but with respect to this world, its cares, riches and honours, he was totally indifferent, without the least anxiety or concern.

Bring then together his wisdom, his virtue, his fortitude, his activity, the perfections of his character, in every thing so extraordinary, that even his enemies could fix upon him no stain: and to these add his total disregard for this earth and all its pursuits; and on the other hand his earnest desire and his constant tendency towards heaven; and then ask, what is the fair inference from this character? That undoubtedly he had the clearest knowledge and conviction of another life.



## C H A P. V,

*The dignity and fortitude, with which Christ supported his sufferings.*

NOW the last argument for a future state, from the character of Jesus Christ, is that dignity and fortitude with which he sustained his sufferings, and that calm resignation, with which he submitted to death. He long foresaw what would be the consequence of his life and principles. He had often felt the unrelenting malice of his enemies: and these enemies were the most numerous, powerful and popular of the Jews. Certainly there was a time, when he might have avoided all his sufferings, only perhaps by humouring a little the popular leaders, or bending, in some small degree, from the straight line of rectitude and  
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integrity; by some slight abatement of his zeal in the service of his heavenly Father, and by slackening his ardour in promoting the interests of truth and virtue, and in reforming and instructing the world. Imminent danger comes sometimes upon men most unexpectedly. Even in a life of danger hope long supports the combatant: he flatters himself that the struggle will end well; that all his efforts will be crowned with victory and honour. Till the very last, hope scarcely ever abandons him.

But there was no uncertainty of this kind with our Lord. On the very entrance on his public ministry, he saw how all his labours would terminate. He early foretold his sufferings, and he prepares his disciples for this period. Yet with all this certain knowledge, he declines no trial, he shrinks from no labour, but with a calm and determined fortitude he prepares to meet death. Now this resolution can be construed into no obstinacy of temper, into no sullen pride, into no love of fame, nor to the bare desire of a crown of martyrdom. In every thing  
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he was unlike to these characters. He was humble without ambition, affable, condescending, and of the most gentle manners. Before his unjust judges, and when harrassed before different tribunals, he betrays no petulance, no fullness, but with a due respect to their offices, he answers all proper questions with readiness; and to captious and insulting questions he observes a dignified silence. He does every thing, that could be expected in such a situation, unless deserting his principles, sinking his character, or betraying an unreasonable fear of death. In the whole of this last scene, you see the same piety, love and goodness, that adorned his life. Perfectly sensible of pain and sufferings, he utters his distress in the genuine expressions of unaffected grief. The language shews the innocence and purity of the sufferer: *My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* But still, he

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never sinks under the pain and shame of his sufferings: he abandons no duty: he discovers no selfishness: he expresses no vain wish for life.

In the history of the martyrs, we have many instances of unshaken fortitude, and much composure and recollection in the article of death. But there is some reason to suppose, that pride, obstinacy, and party spirit might sometimes intermingle themselves with their principles, and lower much the greatness of the last act. Some of the most eminent of the martyrs, and who afterwards suffered so illustriously, had discovered no great lenity and forbearance, when they themselves were in power. Their minds were not always the most enlightened. The doctrines, for which some of them suffered, were so obscure and of so little importance to general virtue, as throws a suspicion on their knowledge or integrity. And in such cases, where some slight compliances, no ways injurious to their cause, or derogatory to their character, might have saved their lives, it gives room to suspect,

suspect, that pride, or some preposterous ambition lurked at the bottom. But Jesus Christ was offered as a sacrifice to envy and malice alone. We cannot find any direct charge brought against him on his trial, that it was possible to obviate or to answer. It was no point of doctrine, no offence against the state, no particular crime for which he was tried; but an accumulation of charges, preferred in vague language, and couched in obscure terms; and these constructed and huddled in such a manner, that it was impossible to know what to answer, what to deny or what to explain. At this time no proof of innocence, no concession was to satisfy his enemies: nothing but the total desertion of character, and an absolute surrender of all that was great and good.

Providence wisely ordered, that Jesus Christ should be brought before the tribunal of Pilate, a judge no ways suspected of favouring his principles or of any partiality to virtue. His enemies also, who were the most powerful and popular of the Jews, urged their accusations with clamour, with

vehemence and with threatening. But, notwithstanding the suppleness of the judge's character and his apprehensions of the resentment of Cesar, at the risk even of a general insurrection he declares his full conviction of the innocence of the prisoner. And what must have been uncommon with such a man as Pilate, he has recourse to various expedients to procure his release. Never was there a testimony so honourable given to a prisoner, and especially to one whose rank in life commanded no attention or respect.

All this proves the injustice and cruelty of his persecutors, for the greatest criminal was never persecuted with such unrelenting vengeance, as the Jews persecuted our Lord. And this was not the act of a rude mob, for the priests and rulers not only permitted the most shocking barbarities, but joined in them themselves. Criminals, even the most odious, usually bespeak compassion, after they are lodged in the hands of justice, and particularly after they are condemned: but the Jews, and even those in the highest rank exercised



exercised every insult, indignity and cruelty to Jesus Christ, and carried that temper and spirit to his very cross. Never did any sufferings equal his in this respect. But all these produced no change either in his temper or in his conduct. He discovers no fondness for life: he shrinks from no principle: he temporises not with the humours of the people; but, firm to his trust, he perseveres in the strict path of duty, and leaves the issue to Providence. There was a perfect conformity between the whole tenour of his life and the manner of his death. He was the same at all times and in every situation. His duty to God, his love to the world, his faithfulness and integrity were always the same. His views never change, and hence no alteration in his conduct.

Many we know to be brave where there is no risk, and even in great danger have preserved a good countenance, where there has been some chance of an escape: but when death has appeared inevitable, and no alternative presented but death or submis-

sion, such situations have shaken the fortitude of many resolute and good men. But, in the hour of darkness, we see the same calmness and composure, the same meekness and perfect recollection, the same temper and the same love in the Saviour of the world, that we meet with in every other part of his life. Human nature exhibits often a strange contradiction. Principles, tempers and characters shift frequently with the scene, but in Jesus Christ we see none of these changes: his mind is still the same, when riding in triumph to Jerusalem and when hanging on the cross. As there are times when the bravest betray cowardice, so there are times likewise when the faint-hearted exhibit momentary fits of heroism. A long and a continually pressing persecution will break the stoutest heart and force complaints; but the life of Jesus, from the time he entered on his public ministry, was an uninterrupted period of discouragement, poverty, and persecution: he was, in a great degree, friendless, insulted, always watched by the spies and emissaries of his powerful enemies, so that  
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had not his mind been supported by some superior principle or power, he must have sunk under the pressure long before he arrived at Mount Calvary. Unprotected and unbefriended as he was by men, yet neither time nor inveterate and powerful enemies, unwearied in their exertions, were ever able to subdue his resolution. What then was his support under this long and severe struggle? Nothing but the certain assurance of another world and of his speedy entrance into glory.

The last scene of his sufferings gives us a pleasing assurance, that by these he was supported. On the cross we see piety, love, filial duty, forgiveness to enemies, even magnificent promises to his fellow sufferer, and the whole ends in a placid resignation to Providence. There is a greatness and dignity inimitable, that could not be counterfeited, in this last scene.

Collecting and comparing the different accounts given by the Evangelists, of this important part, the following seems to be the fact: *When Jesus had cried with a loud voice,*

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*It is finished*, he added, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said this, he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.* This seems to have been a scene most powerfully affecting; for the historians add, *that when the Centurion, who stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the son of God.*

Such then is the character of Jesus Christ, so far as is concerned with the present subject. The single parts, alone and unconnected, constitute strong presumptive evidences of a future world; but when all these different evidences unite in one person, they not only confirm but greatly illustrate and strengthen one another, and produce an evidence unanswerable and almost irresistible, that this life is no more but the beginning of our existence, and that we were formed to live and reign with God for ever and ever. The manner in which Christ talked of a future world and its inhabitants; the clearness of his instructions, the great height to which he at once carried all divine knowledge, the innocence and purity of  
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of his life, his total indifference about all the concerns of this earth, his absolute freedom from every bad passion, his knowledge and wisdom, and that fortitude, calmness and dignity with which he met the king of terrors ; all say, that there must be another world, where virtue and true goodness shall partake of the highest honours and rewards, and where all the sincere followers of Jesus shall be united with him in his everlasting kingdom ; where death and sorrow shall never enter, and where all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes.

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## C H A P. VI.

*The testimony from the history of the  
Apostles.*

AFTER then taking this review of the character of Jesus Christ, it may be proper to introduce, in the next place, his disciples, that we may have an opportunity of seeing that they followed their master in the same line, as far as their imperfections would allow; and that they bring an additional testimony in favour of another life: so that not only Christ himself was firmly persuaded of the reality of these hopes, but that he was able to inspire his disciples with the same faith and the same ardour, the same certainty of a future state, and, in consequence, the same indifference for life, and the same contempt of death.

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Now there are a number of circumstances, that illustrate and corroborate their evidence. *First*, the time, at which these principles particularly discover themselves, is very remarkable: after the death of their Lord and master, the very time at which all their hopes, one would have supposed, must naturally sink, and have been buried in his grave, these principles burst forth and exert their full force. What then must have been the strength of that evidence, which wrought so powerfully in their minds and produced these most astonishing effects! Had they been most powerful when their master was at their head, we might have supposed that obedience, authority, shame, a strong attachment to their master, and a thousand other things might have led them to imitate their Lord, and to adopt his principles and his life. But the fact is, that, during his life, we see these very disciples discovering strong symptoms of ambition, a desire of worldly greatness, betraying much cowardice, easily intimidated,  
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the boldest denying him in the hour of his distress, when all of them forsook him and fled.

Here then is an astonishing change passes upon these disciples, which is a *second* circumstance that demands our attention. Men timid and irresolute, by no means credulous, and, with respect to the character of Christ, labouring under every prejudice, common to their countrymen, at this very time, soon after the death of their Lord and the declaration of his resurrection, they become bold, determined, risking life and character in their attestation of the resurrection, and, consequently, of their belief of a future state. These very men, a few days before weak and timid, become all at once firm and intrepid, preach a crucified Saviour in the face of all Jerusalem, in the face of Pharisees, priests, and rulers, and in the presence of the very persons, who had put to death their Lord and master, whom they openly charge with the murder of this *holy and just one*.

Now this duty they were executing at the hazard of their lives: for their enemies and the enemies of their master were possessed of all power: yet in defiance of all this, they openly tell them, *that they must obey God rather than man: for we cannot, say they, but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* Here then are a number of men of different tempers, spirits, and resolutions, all witnessing a surprising change that has past upon themselves, and that upon a particular event; a change, which firmly united them all in the same views, animated them with the same spirit, armed them with the same fortitude, and which instantaneously produced a total change in every part of their lives.

Now we are not to ascribe this change to their credulity, for they seemed by no means disposed to believe some of the most important doctrines, particularly his own resurrection. They hold out against the evidence of this fact till the very last. One of them positively refuses to be convinced almost upon any evidence, even scarcely by the



the personal presence and appearance of Christ himself. They expected a temporal kingdom, and were undoubtedly utterly disappointed and sunk, when they saw their master crucified. May we not then fairly infer, that the evidence must have been altogether irresistible, that could give such a determined change to persons of these dispositions, so as to stake all their credit and embark all their hopes upon the resurrection of Christ: that armed them with a noble boldness and resolution, that, before the highest tribunals of this world, they openly confessed their faith in, and their adherence to a crucified Saviour, when they knew that contempt, sufferings and death were to follow this acknowledgment?

And the days in which they lived were days of great trial. These were not days of lukewarmness and indifference, when men cannot tell themselves whether they sincerely believe or not. The Apostles of our Lord underwent severe trials: they were dragged before different tribunals, imprisoned, scourged, harrassed by various sufferings,  
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carried sometimes before the governors in Judea, and at other times sent, through long and dangerous voyages and journeys, as far as Rome, before Cesar himself; yet always stedfast and uniform, not to be intimidated even by the certain views of death. And then it is to be remembered, that these were not the short and transient trials of a single week, a single month, or a single year; but through a long and a laborious life, they remained stedfast and unshaken, till at last most of them sealed their testimony with their best blood.

There is another circumstance also that greatly strengthens their evidence, and that is, that their courage and testimony continued the same, when scattered and dispersed throughout the various quarters of the world. If the Apostles had continued in one body, and formed one firm and compact company, we might have been apt to suspect, that either they helped to encourage and support one another; or their joint authority, partly by shame and partly by threats, might have animated the whole body to

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patience and perseverance. But this was not their situation. Scattered up and down in all the quarters of the world, in Europe, in Asia and Africa, removed from all correspondence and intercourse for years together, sometimes confined long in prison, as Paul was at Rome, yet each steadfast, each true to his profession, each persisting in the same life and in the same doctrines, in the same labours and in the same dangers, as if one thought, one spirit and one view animated the whole. Paul, a prisoner and in bonds before Agrippa, and at Rome before Cesar, manifests the same unbroken courage and preaches the same doctrines, as at other times in the presence of his friends. This uniformity and steadiness is a proof of the fullest conviction, and a conviction upon the best of evidence.

Now can there any other reason be assigned for their faith and fortitude, than the pleasing hopes of immortality? We know there are principles, other and different principles, that will maintain a powerful command over the minds of men, and animate them  
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to very singular and hazardous undertakings. The most powerful and remarkable of these principles are enthusiasm, pride, ambition or the love of fame. Were we to examine the Apostles under each of these, we should find from none of them any satisfactory account for their undertaking.

There is not the least appearance of enthusiasm either in their manners or their doctrine. During the time they were favoured with the personal presence of their master, there is not the smallest suspicion of enthusiasm; for we see no ardour, no boldness in any of their measures, but cool and deliberate, abundantly sensible of danger and attentive to personal safety, they were entirely under the direction of Jesus Christ alone. After his resurrection, we see in them more ardour, more courage and resolution, less timidity, less attention to self-preservation; but, abating these, you will meet with no other marks of enthusiasm in their behaviour. There is no wildness in their conduct, no rash scheme, no contempt of the manners and opinions of the world:

they provoke no persecution, they court not martyrdom, but pay every attention to life and personal safety, that their important duties would permit. And, when called before the tribunals of this world, where can you meet with such masterly and powerful defences, as they make for themselves and their conduct? where such able reasoning, as is seen in the addresses both of Peter and of Paul? And, when brought to danger, they employ every honest art and means to effect their deliverance and escape. These are not the manners of enthusiasts: and the Apostles were not mad, but *spoke the words of truth and soberness*. They acted in the very manner you would expect men to act, upon *their* avowed principles and hopes.

Another consideration will place this matter in the clearest point of view. On some occasions, we find even the leading Apostles, differing from one another, in points of prudence and policy, and the contention running so high as to separate also on account of these differences. And on other occasions, where doubtful mat-

ters were brought before the college of the Apostles, they debate the subject in the freest manner, each delivering and supporting his opinion openly and unreservedly, endeavouring to decide the subject by sound reason and argument. Here is nothing of enthusiasm. Now if this does not discover itself in their manners, neither shall we be able to trace it in their doctrines. We have these before us in the New Testament, and they bear all the marks of doctrines the most reasonable, and directed to the best interests of men. If there be, in the New Testament, some things difficult and hard to be understood, we have to claim the same privileges and the same indulgence for them, as for other writings of equal antiquity. But there are only very few things indeed, that are dark and difficult. The generality is easy and intelligible: the doctrines all tend to support our hopes, and the precepts to regulate our lives.

But in the *second* place, can we charge the Apostles of our Lord with any interested or ambitious views? If they were actuated



by either of these, their designs must have been artfully concealed from the world: for it is impossible to discern, how, by the course that they took, they could have served either their interest or their ambition. Interest, I think, they could have none; and if there were at the bottom the love of power, the love of popularity, or some latent spark of ambition, yet is it not strange, that they should reflect the whole of their popularity back on their crucified master, by ascribing to him the sole merit of all their actions, and by publicly declaring that they derived all their power from him? Why did not some of their own body step forth and insinuate himself into the first place? Or, if that could not be done, might they not have endeavoured to fix it with their own collective body? But so far from this, they pass every honour from themselves, and transfer all to Jesus Christ. *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord, and we your servants for Christ's sake.* When they baptized, it was in his name; when they performed great works, it was by virtue of the

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the power derived from him. *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, says Peter to the lame man, *rise up and walk*. On this very occasion, they explicitly disclaim all power and virtue in themselves. When the people expressed great wonder at the extraordinary action, Peter answered, *Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified his son Jesus—and hath raised him from the dead, whereof we are witnesses; and his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea the faith, which is by him, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all*. Where can you find so much humility and self-denial, as in this and in every other part of the behaviour of the Apostles? We find in them no arrogant boasting, no vain-glory, no ostentation; but, with all the determined courage of men, resolved to sacrifice every

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thing for the truth, and with the most ardent love for their master, they are humble and meek, patient and resigned.

Now it will give great credit to their principles and sufferings, if their lives corresponded with their professions and their hopes. And in behalf of this we have strong evidence. The history, to be sure, that we have of them in Scripture, is short, and it would weaken the cause to lay too much stress upon such defective materials. But still we have a number of facts, that will enable us to form a pretty good judgment. The silence even of their enemies on this head is a circumstance of great importance. Their enemies were powerful, capable, vigilant, industrious and in possession of all authority, yet we find no crime, no act of injustice of any kind laid to their charge, nothing to justify the severe persecutions, that were raised against them. With all the virulence and malice of their accusers, we find not a single charge, that affects their moral character. Their novel doctrines  
were



were the only things to which they could direct their attacks. Their innocence and inoffensive conduct was so glaring, that notwithstanding the different governors, before whom they were dragged, were willing to shew the Jews a favour, and to stretch a point of justice to procure their condemnation, yet they seldom could bring their consciences to the side of their wishes; and in general dismissed the prisoners, or contrived to get quit of the business by some one expedient or other. The judges themselves trembled sometimes before their prisoners, *as they reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come.*

And we find, that purity and innocence were long the distinguishing mark of the disciples of Christ: such was the inheritance left them by Christ and his Apostles. We have some remarkable testimonies down as far as the time of Trajan, concerning the purity and innocence of the first christians. The younger Pliny makes the most honourable mention of them in several places of his epistles, when writing to the emperor Trajan.

Trajan. They could find no crime to lay to their charge but their inflexible adherence to their religion, and their veneration for their great master.

By whatever test, then, we try their lives, we shall come, I flatter myself, to adopt that picture, given of them in the Acts of the Apostles, in language most beautiful and simple. *And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they continued daily, with one accord, in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people.*

To sum up then this testimony of the Apostles in favour of a future state. Here are a number of plain, honest, upright and innocent men, who have sacrificed all worldly interests, devoting themselves solely to God's service, and to do good to men; no labour, no difficulty could ever discourage them; no pain or suffering, or even the certain views of death could ever force them

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to abandon their hopes or to renounce their faith: they freely surrender all earthly comforts to teach men to love and serve God, to live soberly, righteously and godly, to practise universal charity and benevolence: and this they do at the expence of every thing dear and valuable. All this they profess to learn in the school of Christ. They follow him as far as imperfect nature possibly can. What then is the inference? Certainly they themselves were animated by the firmest belief of a future world.

There can be no doubt of their sincerity. Now is there any chance that these men were acting under a false bias, under a mistake or a delusion?

They were men of good sense, and had good opportunities for information. Their numbers, their labours, their works, and the miraculous change that their preaching produced in the world, are all evidences, that they must have been endowed with some uncommon powers and gifts, that so much influenced both themselves and others.

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And again, we never can imagine, that God would permit such worthy servants to suffer in the cause of truth and virtue, had there not been provided for them some glorious reward.

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## CONCLUSIONS.

**F**ROM a review of the evidence in favour of a future life, the following conclusions, I think, may be fairly drawn.

*First.* Infidelity, I am persuaded, must appear every way unreasonable, in refusing to believe on evidence so respectable; especially when we consider, that the admission of their principles must prove of infinite hurt to society. They murder the peace and comfort of man, and pull down his best prop in the day of trouble and distress. Demonstration and certainty, you see, are not to be expected in a subject of this nature: these would destroy the very essence of virtue, and unfit man for his situation in the present world. Probability is all that can be expected. And this probability, arising from an infinite variety of evidence, branching out into all directions, all tending

ing to strengthen and support our conviction, produce an evidence sufficient to influence man in his conduct, and to persuade him to act for futurity.

Now what has the unbeliever to oppose to all this? "You have no knowledge of this future world: you never saw one, who had returned from that country to tell us what is passing there, and to furnish us with information concerning the state of the dead." This doctrine then, so important and essential to man, is dismissed upon the evidence of his own ignorance, upon mere uncertainty, darkness and doubt. Because God has not given to them such evidence, as they may chuse to call for, they are resolved to accept of none, and to make no use of the evidence, that infinite wisdom has given to them. With the same propriety might we refuse to make use of our eyes, because God has not given to us the keen and powerful sight of the eagle.

There is every thing that can determine reasonable and prudent men in a case of such importance. And we have this further to  
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urge, that there is no risk in embracing the side of religion, and there is no loss, that you can sustain as the consequence. The man that embraces the doctrines of religion, and lives accordingly, sacrifices only such things as he ought to sacrifice, as his happiness requires; pleasures that are momentary, and which in the end will prove hurtful. The services, that religion enjoins, are also satisfactory and pleasant. He is commanded to follow the path of honour, of justice, integrity and love; the very pursuits, that can render him both useful and respectable in life. Now what motive can the unbeliever have to diligence in propagating his principles? what satisfaction, if he could bring the whole world to his side? Will the hopes and assurance of an eternal annihilation render men better parents and better children, better masters and better servants, better princes and better subjects? Will they give greater strength to the ties of society, greater force to promises and vows, and add more weight to the sanctions of an oath? Will they increase your trust and confidence in mankind?

mankind? Will you love a servant or a friend better, for being able to assure you, that they have no reverence for God, and have no regard for the hopes and fears of immortality?

In affliction, when friends can administer no comfort, and all this earth can purchase no ease, will it increase your fortitude and patience, or add to your dignity and courage, to be assured and convinced, that God regards not your sufferings, that there is no reward for the righteous, and no recompence, in an after life, for all the ills, that we suffer unjustly here. Frightful principles! they thicken the gloom and darkness of death. Away with them from this earth!

In what manner then can infidels justify themselves for the eagerness, with which they scatter such principles, and that keenness, they discover in poisoning all the streams of happiness and of life? If mankind labour under a delusion in this article, it is, as a great man hath long ago said, "an error from which I would never wish to be delivered." It is a pleasing dream, we may

may add, from which we would never wish to awake.

But the blessings that the doctrine of futurity confers on society, and its advantages to the peace and comfort of men, may be urged as one of the strongest evidences of its truth. I never can consider that man as a good citizen, or a friend to the peace and order of the world, and I can scarcely allow him the merit of a good heart, who labours to unhinge the belief of mankind in a doctrine of so great importance to his happiness, and to plant everlasting doubt and distrust in his mind. For though, I must allow, that men of the greatest honesty and with the best intentions, men, who employ every possible means to enlarge their understandings, may not be able to produce in their minds full conviction, or to remove every remaining uneasiness and doubt; yet to publish these principles, to scatter doubts and uneasiness in the world, must arise either from a principle of vanity or malignity, either from a desire to appear singular and to gain proselytes, or from a wish to disturb

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the peace of the world ; whichever of these be the case, it will be difficult to reconcile them with a principle of benignity and of love. It should be strong evidence indeed, that should determine man to surrender all his honour, to part with all his hope, and to embrace the frightful part of infidelity.

In the *second* place, the doctrine of a future state reconciles us to many of the appearances of this world, and unravels many of the mysteries of Providence. In this life we often see many good men born to sufferings, unfortunate in all their schemes, unjustly despised and persecuted, unhappy frequently in their families, their children and in all their connections, the sport of fortune, doomed often to suffer not for themselves, but for their families and their friends. How are we to reconcile these appearances to the government of a wise and good God ? All is dark and distressing, if this earth be the only place of our existence ! But if we accept of the principles of the gospel, and say that this is no more but the beginning of our existence ; the whole

whole mystery is solved and every difficulty vanishes: all appears wise and well.

Good men, upon this supposition, may be exposed to a life of suffering, that, in their behaviour, they may give to the world an example of faith, of patience and of fortitude, and shew also the power of religion. Then their sufferings, in this case, are only short when compared with eternity: and, in their most afflicted situation, they have for their support the testimony of a good conscience, hope, trust and that peace of mind which passeth all understanding. And their short sufferings will be infinitely compensated by the duration and greatness of their future reward.

On the other hand, the triumphs of vice are equally mysterious and distressing. Tyrants, the scourges of mankind, are often prosperous in all their undertakings, and fortunate even in villany and in blood: they leave the world also frequently without any public punishment, without any visible manifestation of the displeasure of Heaven for all the murders they have perpetrated, and

for all the blood they have shed upon this earth. There is no solution of this difficulty without renouncing a gracious Providence and allowing the world to be abandoned by an infinitely wise and good God, and delivered over to the wild passions of men. A horrid solution ! But introduce a future state ; this then is only the beginning of a scheme, and we see here only a detached part. We are, therefore, incapable of forming a just judgment, on account of our weakness and our ignorance. Upon the principles of a future state, wicked men and all tyrants, at their removal hence, fall still into the presence of the same God. *Then woe be to the wicked, for it shall not be well with him. These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and be banished from the society of all that is great and good.*

Again, some are hurried away from the present world in the bloom of health and strength and virtue, without having had an opportunity of displaying their talents, or of reaping the full fruits of their labour and virtues. The human life is the most uncer-

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tain of all others. But, if we believe in another life, we must admit that they have fulfilled the ends of their appointment, that they have answered the design of their being sent into this life : and that in the other world all the little inconveniences or disappointments that they have met with, shall be fully made up in that state, which shall never end. The disorders, the confusions, the triumphs of vice, and the depressions of virtue, the shortness and uncertainty of human life, are all to be accounted for on the belief, that this world is only a state preparatory to a more perfect world beyond the grave,

But, in the *third* place, the belief of a future state is the best foundation of morals. Propriety of conduct, a sense of moral beauty, justice, the interests of society, are all feeble and ineffectual props to support a good life ; and weapons ill fitted to combat the strength of passion, interest, convenience, and all the other obstacles arising from a corrupted heart. Human laws the best contrived, can only restrain wickedness, when it breaks in upon the order of society,

and check those violent outrages, which affect the life, character and property of your neighbour. But these give no spring to virtue. They give no encouragement to love, benevolence and compassion, and all the different kinds of active goodness, which are the ornament of our nature and essential to the amiable and excellent character. None of these principles extend their influence to the virtues most useful in private life. They will be of no use to make better parents or children, to excite humanity, bowels of compassion, tenderness and brotherly kindness: and there are none of these principles and no laws of man, that extend to the thoughts, to the various workings and emotions of the human heart. Here is the true source of vice and virtue, from which issue all the various actions of men, and which gives to them their genuine character and colour.

But the belief of a future world, and its accompanying doctrines penetrate into, and extend to all; affect all; and, wherever they are cordially received and believed, must have a most animating influence over all thoughts,

thoughts, all words and all actions. The doctrine of immortality, a future judgment, our eternal allotment to be determined by our behaviour here, and that judgment to extend to every thought, to every word and to every action, and God himself to be the judge, all-wise to discern the true character, and all-powerful to execute his sentence, ought to maintain a most powerful command over the human heart. What manner of creatures ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! This then is the philosophy of the gospel. These are the awful sanctions of the christian law. They are addressed to every affection, to our hope and fear, our ambition, our interest, and all the best feelings of the human heart.

The man that endeavours to subvert these principles, to destroy these fears, or to sink these hopes, can you call *him* a friend to society or the friend of man? One of the most distinguished of modern infidels, in one, certainly, of his serious and thoughtful moments, writes to the following purpose, " I should  
" look upon that man as the greatest ene-



“ my to society, who should endeavour to  
“ undermine the doctrines of religion, be-  
“ cause, it is taking the strongest curb out  
“ of the mouth of that wild beast man.”

And yet how many men have prostituted their abilities, like this noble author, to sap the foundation of all our hopes !

Again. What doctrine so capable of enlarging the human heart and destroying all mean and selfish passions, as the belief that we are a part of the great family of heaven and of earth ; that, at the conclusion of this mortal period, we shall be united to that perfect society, where love and concord reign in full perfection for ever and ever ?

What doctrine so powerful to support the mind under the various temptations of this life, and to preserve it pure, honest and upright, as the assurance, that God is our witness and that he will be our portion and our exceeding great reward ? What principle so strong to oppose to the violent temptations, with which we are assailed in this world, and which lead men to sacrifice principle, integrity and every thing, as the assurance, that

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we must answer for all our actions, and that this judgment will extend to every thought and to every secret transaction? Human nature, without this, will measure its duties by its desires and conveniences. Appetite then will be the law, and satiety its boundary; or the more prudent may preserve some regard to health and earthly enjoyments alone.

Indeed, without this principle, virtue and vice, in many cases, will be only mere names, invented by statesman and legislators to bridle the wills of men and to make them subservient to political purposes. If we can only conceal our actions from the world, we need fear no other restraints. Hypocrisy and cunning and deceit, on this system, become necessary branches of education to qualify men for this world, and the best governors of life. To make the most of the present must be the best plan of happiness. Patriotism will be knight-errantry, and sufferings for truth and conscience egregious madness and folly. And in all cases, where convenience, worldly interest or inclination

clination interfere with duty, never hesitate : to these, sacrifice principle, integrity, friendship and every thing. Promises, oaths, vows and every obligation held most sacred among men lose all their force ; for all dies with this body, and there is no future reckoning.

We see what confusion and disorder, what distrust and dark suspicion, infidelity introduces into the world, and what monsters it makes men. Let the infidel, if he can, escape these conclusions, and reconcile his system to virtue and morality. I cannot find any apology for his principles and conduct, unless he introduce new morals, new virtues and new obligations into the world. Grant only, that human nature is weak, that there is a secret propensity to innumerable vices, that we are apt to lean to present interest and to follow corrupt desires. What has he to oppose to all this weakness, selfishness and evil inclinations ? He only lets loose a flood of disorders and of evil passions on this earth. He is bursting every mound of virtue, and breaking through every tie that can hold  
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man. But grant immortality and all is well: you find a perfect remedy for all the disorders and confusion of this earth.

*Fourthly.* The doctrine of a future state confers true dignity on man. It extends his existence: it widens his prospects: it enlarges his connections, and it gives him the pleasing hope of a never-ceasing increase of knowledge of virtue and of happiness. There can in short be no bounds set to his expectations on this principle. *We know not what we shall be*; but we trust, that we shall be at last associated to pure and perfect spirits, become the companions of angels, partakers of the divine nature, and live for ever in the society of all that is great and good.

How much, on the contrary, does infidelity degrade human nature? It brings down the lord of this lower world to the level of the beast. Where is man's distinction and pre-eminence on this principle? We may truly say, that if there be not another life, of all creatures, we are the most contemptible. Born the weakest and the most helpless, subject to numberless bodily infirmities and diseases,

diseases, in some situations exposed to poverty, reproach and unjust persecutions, to the shafts of malice, of envy and of hatred, to numberless mental infirmities and weaknesses, dejection of mind, despondency, to the stings of conscience, to severe self-accusation, to sufferings both on account of ourselves and our friends, and all our life time subject to bondage from the fear of death; and then, after all, to sink into the grave and arise no more. Here is the end of all our honours and of all our hopes. This puts an everlasting period to all the relations and connections of this life. Life, light, love, friendship, knowledge, virtue and all happiness are for ever extinguished, never more to be revived. Behold the disgrace and misery which infidelity brings upon man! To this tend all their labours, and all their boasted discoveries. It is religion alone, that exalts human nature and is the only true friend to the human race.

But *fifthly*. The doctrine of a future state affords the only consolation to good men under afflictions, on the approach of death,  
and

and on the death of their nearest and dearest relations and friends.

To good men, in all conditions and situations, it speaks comfort and joy. To those afflicted with bodily sufferings, it says, " Though your pains be severe, and your afflictions tedious, be not discouraged : they will have a happy termination ; and *the light afflictions of this body, which endure but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared to that eternal weight of glory, which, in God's good time, shall be revealed.*" To good men afflicted with poverty : " Bear patiently, for a rich reward awaits you in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." To the infirm : " These frail and vile bodies shall be changed : they shall receive immortal strength, vigour and beauty, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption : they shall be made like unto the glorious body of our Lord." To those distressed with the appearances of sin and sorrow, that prevail in this world : " God overrules all these for good : to sin and  
" sorrow,



“ sorrow, there shall be a happy period ; for  
“ all sin shall be banished, and all sorrow  
“ extinguished in the abode of the blessed.”

In every affliction, religion affords the best comfort. There are often situations in this life, where all the power and art of man are of no avail : neither riches, honour or favour can purchase one moment's ease : friends can only render a fruitless sympathy : they cannot purchase, even with their lives, one hour's respite from the tormenting pains of the gout or the stone, or any other of the dreadful disorders, which are the inheritance of man.

A wicked man, under these afflictions, has no comfort. In his agonies of pain, he may roar out his complaints, and blaspheme the God that formed him ; but he has no confidence in his goodness ; and the only termination he can look for, is an entire end of his existence with his sufferings, an everlasting annihilation. Dreadful consolation ! But the believer in the gospel and in a future state is assured, that though his pains may be sharp and his sufferings tedious, they  
cannot

cannot last long ; they will at least end with his mortal life. But death, that pulls down this earthly tabernacle, cannot destroy the whole of his existence ; he *has a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. Such principles must strengthen his patience and his fortitude, and support his resignation and chearfulness. And such principles also never stand alone : they bring with them powerful assistants. They give such representations of the Supreme Being, as direct us to look upon every dispensation as good : they cheer the mind with the assurance of his perpetual, merciful presence. They tell us, that, under the direction of infinite wisdom and universal love, all must end in triumph to the good man : afflictions, persecutions, reproaches in a good cause, are all intended for his final happiness.

The good man has cause to glory even in tribulation, *knowing, that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope ; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our heart,*

\*

*through*

*through Jesus Christ.* Afflictions are often necessary to refine and purify our nature, to destroy the remainder of sin and imperfection, and to fit the soul for a purer society and for a more perfect state of existence. It is appointed, sometimes, for particular men, upon some trying occasions, through much tribulation, to enter into the kingdom of God.

But the doctrine of the immortality of the soul enables us to look with calmness and without fear upon the approach of our own dissolution. What can infidelity administer to man, labouring under much uneasiness and distress, as he draws near to the brink of the grave, and seeing this world and all its enjoyments perishing, with respect to him, and the angel of death denouncing that time shall be no more? Death is a serious concern and an awful change even to the best of men. Suppose then a man of infidel principles, but of a regular life and of irreproachable manners, cast on the bed of death, all hope of life extinguished, restless, uneasy and dissatisfied, casting about his  
anxious,



anxious, dying eyes to look for some prop  
whereon now to lean, some comfort to enable  
him to sustain the last scene with dignity.  
What argument can infidelity offer to rouse  
him to a manly fortitude? " You will soon  
" be past all feeling; your reason, memory,  
" thought, consciousness, all will be soon  
" extinguished, never to revive more; and  
" your body will be mingled with the com-  
" mon dust, equally destitute of feeling and  
" of honour: you will soon be as if you  
" never had been. After the termination  
" of your present existence, you will be of  
" no higher distinction in the sight of God,  
" than a worm or a stone." Good God!  
what comfort is this? It may add to the de-  
pression of a mind already sunk very low;  
but it can rouse no manly exertion, no for-  
titude, no chearfulness, and no joy. How  
different from the language of religion!  
" That death, which you so much dread,  
" is only a passage to a more perfect life.  
" The passage is dark, but you have God for  
" your strength and your guide. The pain  
" will be soon over, the darkness soon past,

Q

" and

“ and then all will end in joy, in everlasting light and love.” In which of these two states would you wish to stand at last? Prepare now accordingly. Were there no other advantages of good principles and a good life, than this triumphant departure, they ought to be purchased by even a world of sacrifices and mortifications. But there is no occasion for such a price, for the life of religion is the very best plan we can follow for present peace, as well as for future and eternal happiness.

But one of the greatest advantages derived from the doctrine of a future state is the hope and consolation it administers on the death of near and dear friends. At such times, the mind passionately enquires concerning their present and their future state. It is painful to think that they are everlastingly lost, that their virtues, talents and all those qualities, that are the foundation of our love and friendship, are for ever extinguished, never more to be revived. Such passionate desires, it must be owned, have led to many idolatrous and superstitious practices, in the honours

honours paid to the memories and lifeless bodies of departed friends. But religion must not be made accountable for all the abuses arising from the follies and weakness of man. The doctrine of a future state enables us to look on death, not as the destroyer of our existence, but as the messenger of our Lord and master to deliver his faithful servants from the miseries of life, and to put them in possession of their glorious reward.

It gives us great ground to hope, that our virtuous friends are not dead, but sleep, that all their virtues, which we esteemed so highly, are not extinguished, but removed to a kinder clime and a happier society; that we shall meet again, when they and ourselves shall be more perfect, and that we shall no more be distressed by their pains and sufferings, and never again dread a cruel separation.

If we have a firm persuasion of the truth of these doctrines, it changes, in every view, the aspect of death. The separation will be only short: their battle is over: their



miseries are ended: and their labours crowned with an everlasting reward. To such as have lost their dearest friends, this is the most powerful consolation.

If there be any unbelievers, who, possessed of the feelings of friendship, have been deprived by death of a parent or a child, or the dear partner of all their joys and all their sorrows, at such times, they must at least wish, that the doctrine of immortality was true; and must abhor those principles, which increase the horror of death, which rob the mind of every comfort, and murder all hope. Then let them acknowledge, that religion is the noblest ornament of our nature; that in prosperity it gives dignity; and in adversity it affords the best, the only support to man.

F I N I S.

